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Collector's
Edition

HALLOWEEN V: MYERS IS BACK FROM HELL!

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HORRORFAN

WINTER 1989 \$3.95

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Robert Englund
As The

PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

Brings A
Demented Twist
To The Classic Story

SPECIAL PREVIEWS

DARKMAN

Sam Raimi is
frightened by his
own film

COMMUNION

Christopher Walken is
abducted by aliens

NIGHT ANGEL

A she-demon from Hell
seduces the world

BRAIN DEAD

The grossest
brain surgery shots ever!



EXCLUSIVE:

First ever photos

CAPTAIN AMERICA

the newest screen
super hero



REGIE
ARTHUR
LUBIN

Technicolor



NELSON EDDY
SUSANNA FOSTER · CLAUDE RAINS

LE FANTOME^{DEL} OPERA

Het Spook van de Opera

"PHANTOM
OF THE
OPERA"



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Are Freddy and Jason fans interested in horror classics?

This issue marks our first anniversary—yup, one year folks. One down and quite a lot to go if we're going to break Forry Ackerman's record of... how many decades was that? Well, we may not get *that* far, but we hope to provide *Horrorfan* for a long, long time to come.

It's my belief that horror fans are easily the most undated of all magazine consumers. They are very loyal readers who possess a great deal of knowledge about their favorite subject—horror. My goal is to give our fans their money's worth. A \$3.95 cover price isn't cheap, but dollar for dollar, *HF* easily offers readers more for their money than any competitive magazine. Talk is easy, but the proof is in the pudding. *Horrorfan* will continue to be jam-packed with color previews, comprehensive retrospectives, guest columnists, exclusive interviews and a delicate balance of what is old and new in horror film and video.

On page 51 you'll find a reader's survey. Although I'd much rather use the valuable space for film coverage, the survey will provide us with vital information. Simply put, the best way for us to give you, our readers, the kind of magazine you want, is for us to know more about your specific interests. I appreciate your taking the time to respond.



I received a call from someone at MCA Home Video who was trying to determine if there was still an inter-

est in horror classics. "Are Freddy and Jason fans, since they're mainly kids, still interested in the films of yesteryear?" The answer I had was very simple: "There comes a time in every horror fan's life when they are driven to fill in the blanks."



The hesitancy of the classics is that once you've seen them, watching new films takes on a new and enlightened perspective. Once you've viewed *Frankenstein*, *Invaders from Mars*, *Curse of the Demon* or *Carnival of Souls*, you're hooked. "How in the world could I miss all those great flicks?" is the natural response when these titles are brought up. The born-again fan has just opened up an entire spectrum of horror film entertainment that, due to the advent of video, is now easily available to him or her. Remember, kids who are horror fans become adults who are horror fans. They may be going through their gross-out gore stage now, but splatter effects alone become boring eventually, and fan's begin to look for more: plots, characterizations, and so on. That's why *Horrorfan* has featured—and will continue to feature—retrospectives and interviews spotlighting past scare cinema greats. Don't give up on the horror classics.

Sincerely,

Bruce L. Hazard

Bruce J. Schoengood
Editor

Letters To The Editor

Readers respond to *Horrorfan*

Not Too Loud

Thanks for a great magazine! In my opinion, it is the best in the industry. I, myself, am most interested in science fiction (I loved your review of *Robot Jox*), but I've found *Horrorfan* more informative about sci-fi than most other magazines. Keep it up. I love all the information. About the older movies—great stuff! One thing I would like to see, believe it or not, is advertising! I really enjoy seeing what's available in soundtracks, model kits, books, etc. . . .

G. Spencer
Hamilton, NZ

Well, there's always a first and this is one of them. We can't compete with *Film Fas*, but we'll do our best

Lynched

I just read your article in *HF Summer 89*. My son found the article in it about Richard Lynch. He wanted it for the other articles. I just wanted the part about Richard Lynch. So the kid lucked out.

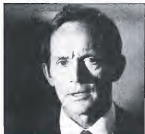
Thank you for the article. This fellow has piqued my interest for a number of years now. But I have a question regarding your article. It was stated in the article that he was married and had a son. That's rather uninformative, actually. What I would like to know:

- 1) Is he married now or what?
- 2) Is there an available address to write to him?

I've enjoyed his evilness now for at least ten years and I would like to be able to tell him so.

Jacqueline Nagel
Tucson, AZ

Lynch is now single. Send your letter here and we'll forward it to him.



We Want Lance

Congratulations on your new magazine! *Horrorfan*, with its eye-catching cover, attracted my attention immediately. Obviously, much care has been taken to design a new kind of magazine, which is not a carbon-copy of existing publications. The overall approach of *Horrorfan* is very positive. For once, I read the entire magazine, instead of selective articles. I hope your efforts are rewarded by attracting a loyal following and that you give the other horror publications a run for their money!

I have a request, please. Lance Henriksen (*Aliens*, *Near Dark*) is often featured in horror movies, where he effectively portrays menacing characters. Articles on this talented actor are few and far between. Apart from *Aliens*, most of the movies he has appeared in seem to have come and gone without much publicity. Would you be prepared to feature an article on his past/present projects or an interview? Even a brief biography on Lance would be most welcome.

Helen Hodgman
Victoria, Australia

We will be doing a feature on Lance in our upcoming issue.

Laser Rot

Thank you for such a classy magazine. I just have one comment. The "Shelf Life" section should definitely be expanded. I enjoyed all the reviews, but I recommend that they should be half the length so you can squeeze in double the amount. Ditch the laser coverage and devote the valuable space to other reviews. You can never have enough.

James Katch
Brooklyn, NY

YOU'RE A PAL

I must congratulate you on creating what I consider to be the perfect horror mag. Your interview with Dave DeCoteau in *HF Fall 89* was superb, and the Gunnar Hansen article in *Summer 89* was an enjoyable, informative piece of work.

Also, I must commend you for having the guts (pardon the pun) to publish Linnea Quigley's topless photo in issue #1 despite all of the off-the-wall censorship that goes on these days. Concerning Miss Quigley, she is a very talented and attractive young lady, so if she has no objection to showing off a little, then why should anyone else? I'm sure that every young man in America who has an active set of hormones agrees with me on that point. I have been a big fan of hers for quite some time and have gone to great lengths to obtain my own copy of all of her movies.

Chris Peace
Bradenton, FL

Halloweenie

First off, I'd like to say how much I enjoy your magazine and I think you should consider publishing it more than four times a year. I haven't come across a horror magazine this good in a long time. Your articles just get better every issue. But I have a small complaint about the "Shelf Life" section in *HF Fall 89*. I agreed with all the reviews except for one written by Joe Norton. I know it's only one man's opinion, but what he wrote really offended me. *Halloween 4* was a lot of fun; I found it extremely entertaining and to have it destroyed in the pages of your magazine was very upsetting. The one thing about the review that really angered me was how Norton kept referring to a "toned down" *Halloween 4*, minus gore and blood. Has this guy seen the original *Halloween*? John Carpenter created a film that was shocking and suspenseful without using explicit gore. *Halloween 4* was a welcome return to that idea. Too many of today's horror films rely on fancy FX to scare an audience. Don't get me wrong, I like blood and guts. Live for it, but it doesn't belong in the *Halloween* series!

Shawn Smith
Oakland, CA

Horrorfan welcomes reader correspondence. Please address your letters to: *Horrorfan* Letters To The Editor, GCR Publishing, 886 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10106. All letters should be typed, if possible, this makes reading and processing them faster and easier. Remember to accompany any queries or requests with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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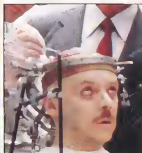
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WATCH the SKIES

Films from other galaxies are landing at a theater near you

CAPTAIN AMERICA

As Hollywood scrambles to cash in on the success of *Batman*, Menahem Golan (who, with Cannon, blew it with *Superman IV* and was never able to get *Spiderman* off the ground) is determined to pick up a hot super hero. Aided by his trusty ward, director Albert Pyun, Golan tries once more with his newest comic book incarnation—*Captain America*.



As the story starts, it's 1941 and the United States has just entered the war. Our soon-to-be hero, Steve Rogers, is excited after being chosen to participate in a top-secret military program called "Operation Re-birth." Twenty-four hours after being injected with a special serum, Rogers gains the strength of 100 men and is given a red, white and blue uniform and shield to boot. Look out Nazi scum... Captain America is coming. But, "Holy Hitler," Adolph has been a busy beaver, he has also developed his own evil human



weapon—the Red Skull. Lo and behold, the super beings clash, resulting in Captain America being frozen in a block of ice at the North Pole. He is finally discovered and thawed out 40 years later, ready to resume his never-ending battle against evil... and the Red Skull.

Although the Captain is played by newcomer Matt Salinger, the supporting cast of this \$10-million production is filled with old genre reliables. They include Henry Cox (*Robocop*), Ned Beatty (*Superman*), Darren McGavin (*The Night Stalker*) and Michael Nouri (*The Hidden*). In trying to emulate a proven formula, only time will tell if Golan didn't take too much of a chance by not casting Billy Crystal in the title role!



SEXBOMB

Linnea (her last name, Quigley, was killed off) stars as Phoebe Love in a tongue-in-cheek self-parody of her own screen persona in this Phillips & Mora production. Mixing sex, werewolves and rock 'n' roll with a twist of *Body Heat*, *Sexbomb* is certainly covering all the bases. In the middle of all the shenanigans is A.I.P. veteran Robert Quarry playing horror-movie mogul King Faraday. Count Yorga must be turning in his grave.



Seems King Faraday (Quarry), is finishing his latest horror classic, *I Rip Your Flesh* (with *Fliers*), starring Phoebe Love (Linnea), aka Queen of the Screen Queens. As usual, the temperamental Faraday fires his director and writer before he starts production on his next masterpiece, *Werewolves in Heat*. His voluptuous and overly active young

wife, Candy Faraday (Della Sheppard), intervenes to hand the creative reigns of the film over to neophyte screenwriter Lou Lurrod (Stewart Benton). However, unbeknownst to King and Lou, Candy has her own ideas for the two of them, as she tries to seduce Lou into killing off King. As fate would have it, during a heated argument with Lou, King suddenly dies of a heart attack. Panicked by King's sudden death, Lou and Candy try to hide King's body. Using the special effects make-up at hand, they transform the "King of the B's" into a horror-film corpse.

Phoebe Love comes to Lou's rescue as he tries to get away from Candy while finishing the filming and keeping the "artistic integrity" of *Werewolves in Heat*.



BURIED ALIVE

Buried Alive, a loose adaptation of Poe's short story, "The Premature Burial," gives the old story—more faithfully adhered to in Corman's *The Premature Burial* (1962)—some new twists.

This time, it's Janet Pendleton (Karen Witter), a teacher in a girls' correctional school, who harbors the devastating fear of being buried alive. She's had half-seen visions and assumed hallucinations of several of the



girls being thrown into holes, screaming and covered with dirt.

Janet finds security in her romance with Gary (Robert Vaughn), the



school's charismatic headmaster. Gary assures her the missing girls most likely ran away, but Janet can't stop her persistent visions.

The strange relationship Gary has with the inmates frightens her further. Goaded by curiosity, she discovers that the school used to be an insane asylum, the straight jackets and shock treatment tables gathering dust in the basement. But far more shocking is the

dark secret Gary conceals...

The cast, an interesting blend of battle-scarred horror veterans and relative newcomers, includes John Carradine, hard-working Donald Pleasence and ex-X-rated star Ginger Allen. The film's producer, Harry Alan Towers, has written and/or produced over 50 movies over his 30-year career, including *Call of the Wild*, *Rocket to the Moon*, and the five *Fu Manchu* films.



TRANSIT

A convicted psychopathic murderer is executed and comes back to life to continue his killing ways. Are we talking about... *Horror Show*? No. *Shocker*? No. *Maniac Cop*? No. We're talking about *Transit*, the latest in the "capital punishment don't work" subgenre. Is Mario Cuomo investing in Hollywood?

Lou Diamond Phillips stars as Russ Logan, a tough, cynical cop trying to find a rational solution to a mounting mystery. People are being murdered and inverted pentagrams are found etched in their bodies. The problem is the killer of these "Pentagram Murders" has already been captured and put to death, yet the killing continues. With the help of his informant, Tess Seaton, played by Tracy Griffith, a professional psychic, Logan has to perform one last ritual to stop the killing, an arcane art called *Transit*.

GREMLINS II

An entirely new second generation of America's most popular and cheerfully malevolent creatures will return in *Gremlins II*.

Exclusive on-the-set photos of effects artist John Buechler being made-up to play the Mister, an evil spirit in Douglas Curtis' new terrorfest, *The Sleeping Car*. David Naughton, Jeff Conaway and Kevin McCarthy are along for the frightful ride.



Even evil spirits read horror's #1 magazine.



for Warner Brothers and Amblin Entertainment. Director Joe Dante along with stars Zach Galligan and Phoebe Cates return for the sequel.

This time around the Kingdon Falls sweethearts, Billy Peltzer (Galligan) and Kate Beringer (Cates), leave their small hamlet for the big city. They meet up once again with their Mogwai friend Gizmo while working in the futuristic high-tech Clamp Centre office complex. A series of accidents creates a totally new and deliciously malicious gaggle of gremlins that run amok in the huge expanses of Clamp Centre. Billy, Kate and Gizmo must once again use all their ingenuity and experience to prevent another creature-induced catastrophe.

THE HOUSE OF USHER

Literary fright fans take note: Poe is back. While the works of such greats as H.P. Lovecraft (*Re-Animator*), *From Beyond* and H.G. Wells (*War of the Worlds*) has been pillaged in recent horror film history, the incredible



imaginings of Edgar Allan Poe have gone largely ignored since Roger Corman's infamous low-budgeters of the late 50s/early 60s.

The House of Usher, adapted from Poe's 1839 novel, will be hitting the screens in the late fall/early winter, breaking a long dry spell. Directed by Alan Birkinshaw and pro-

MURDER WEAPON

Cinema Home Video has been organized to produce "handsomely mounted movies, especially for the home-video market." CHV's primary output will stress a combination of horror and sexy *Scream Queens*. The company's initial release, *Murder Weapon*, will debut in October. Linnea Quigley, the nation's premiere *Scream Queen*, co-stars with Lyle Waggoner and Karen Russell (*Vice Academy*). The premise involves two beautiful vixens who invite eight rugged "ladykillers" to a party. Beer caps and bikini tops are popped on the palatial site of the festivities. Unfortunately, the guests



are not aware that one of the comely hostesses loathes men; on the other hand, the ladies should have been more discriminating about the checked pasts of their visitors.



Someone among the party-goers is helping him/herself to freshly spilled blood... and, whoever it is, the culprit keeps coming back for more. The viciousness of each slaughter is determined from a menu of murder weapons. The movie is filled to capacity with mayhem and lust (The latter includes exposure of Linnea's heavenly body).

duced by Harry Alan Towers, *Usher* was made under the newly unfurled banner of 21st Century Films. The new company is headed by Menahem Golan, who's already made his mark in the entertainment world as co-chief of Cannon Films.

Starring such suspense staples as Oliver Reed and Donald Pleasence, the flick tells the tale of the doomed Usher family and Molly McNulty (Romy Windors), a young woman who's



about to marry into it. She and her husband-to-be, Ryan Usher (Rufus Swart) are waylaid by ghosts as they travel to meet his reclusive English uncle, Roderick Usher (Reed). Ryan, injured, is spirited



away by the staff of the old Gothic mansion while Roderick turns his attention to Molly, explaining the maddening degenerative disease that afflicts the Usher family. Molly eventually discovers her nearly dead fiancé and Roderick's older

brother Walter (Pleasence), stricken with an advanced form of the mysterious disease, who is locked behind steel doors. She attempts to escape with Ryan when things take a turn for the worse. Poe fans can expect a suitably macabre finale.



PHANTOM OF THE MALL: ERIC'S REVENGE

Shoppers are going to need more protection than credit cards as a phantom-like killer stalks America's favorite hangout—the shopping mall

Phantom of the Mall: Eric's Revenge has a very important message to make: don't work in a shopping mall—it could be hazardous to your health. At least that's the case in this mall in particular, as it's built on the spot where Eric's house used to stand before the local developer hired someone to burn it to the ground—while Eric was still inside. Only Eric didn't die, as everyone thought; instead, now grossly disfigured, he stalks the mall's subterranean passageways and air ducts, exacting revenge and seeking the girlfriend with whom he's still obsessed.



Apart from its title, the film offers little in the way of parody or homage to the Gaston Leroux novel or the 1928 film classic, *The Phantom of the Opera*. Nevertheless, *Eric's Revenge* is a slick, well-produced and fun "vengeful, disfigured maniac on the loose" flick.

The story focuses on Melody (Kari Whitman), Eric's girlfriend, who was with him the night of the suspicious fire. Lying semi-conscious after falling from an upstairs window, she catches a glimpse of the arsonist before he escapes. A year passes by and, as fate or the screenwriters would have it, she gets a job as a waitress in the mall. Before you can say, "Attention, K-Mart shoppers," the body count starts piling up. Eric, played by Derek Rydall, keeps himself busy by making chop-axe out of repairmen, security guards and anyone else who pisses off either Melody or himself.

When one of his guards is dumped practically in his lap, developer Harv Posner (Jonathan Goldsmith) brings back his old arsonist buddy to take care of the now out-of-control situation. The stage for sweet retribution is set.

What sets this film apart from others of its ilk is its cast of young, appealing and talented actors—not your usual annoying hoard of clichéd, horny kids that audiences have come to expect in a typical chop-axe-upper. Leading the way are Kari Whitman as Melody and Rob Estes as the photographer who falls in love with her. They are very engaging and have a strong on-screen chemistry. Whitman is particularly touching whenever her character finds orchids and other reminders of past love that Eric plants for her throughout the film. Unfortunately, Rydall's Eric is not "fleshed out" enough, and his big reunion with Melody, when it finally happens, is lackluster and devoid of any true emotion. Gregory Scott Cummins as the pyro-for-hire is positively menacing and proves to be a memorable villain.

The satirical premise of a man haunting one of modern America's most important institutions, the mall, sadly is never fully developed. "This mall now puts Midwood on the map," boasts the town's Mayor. And while the line itself is slightly amusing, the fact that the sassy official is played by Morgan Fairchild is very amusing, although she does put in a particularly wooden turn here. The story becomes a routine "who's gonna get it next?" as events unravel in predictable fashion. Although



Eric's facial make-up is excellent, the heavy-handed gore element is most annoying. So while the acting and Richard Friedman's direction are certainly notches above par, the gore FX, by contrast, are surprisingly amateurish-looking. Accompanying each killing is usually a close-up shot of blood spurting one way or another. These insert shots seem awkward and work against the pacing of the film. The climax, however, features some excellent stunt work, highlighted by Her Honor the Mayor being thrown from one of the mall's top-level windows and becoming impaled on a modern sculpture below.

Phantom of the Mall: Eric's Revenge just may cause long lines when it plays at the mall nearest you. The appealing performances, good production values and the added bonus of seeing Ms. Fairchild impaled rates it well worth a look.

—Bruce J. Schoengood



BUGS—BEWARE!

In vengeful hordes, as murder weapons or actually incorporated into humans, insects and spiders provide a unique and terrifying threat

By W.B. Gerard

Savage and nearly unstoppable, movie bugs have eaten out a niche for themselves in the realm of the horror film. In addition to sporting their usual vicious natures and voracious appetites, six- and eight-legged fiends usually have some added advantage—like intelligence or a lust for revenge—to make them more of a threat on-screen.

Big bugs, as exploited in *THEM!* and *Tarantula!*, have an obvious edge with their size (for more on these films, see Part One in *HF Fall 1989*). But while these colossal creepies are fairly frightening (at least when credibly portrayed), normal-sized bugs are rarely seriously scary; more often, they're simply repulsive. When army ants go on a flesh-eating rampage, it's normal behavior for their species, but such large-scale violence is an exception to the rule. By and large, the status-quo bug doesn't raise any goosebumps—unless it's actually crawling on someone. To make the tiny terrors truly nasty and worthy of even a minuscule movie budget, the bug must have something extra going for it.

Phase IV effectively exploits many of our innate fears about insects.

A common ploy among filmmakers is to give their tiny terrors intelligence and an army-like organization, the equivalent of a communal mind linking tens of thousands (and sometimes millions) of vengeful critters. Interestingly, the hating bugs are usu-



Repulsive arsonist roaches in *Bug*.
credit: MPTV-108

ally driven to retribution by man's abuse of the environment. That it may be high time for nature to take over was initially explored in the *Hellstrom Chronicle* (72) and further embellished upon in *Frogs* (73). In the latter, Ray Milland epitomizes exploitative mankind, and needless to say, suffers the most from nature's wrath. Sam Elliot, the sensitive ecologist, escapes with the girl. The title characters, along with equally outraged snakes and spiders, overrun a small, sparsely inhabited island, but the implication of a wider rebellion persists. Unfortunately, dispassionate performances by human Guild Member and crewly alike, coupled with luke-warm direction, makes *Frogs* fairly hard to swallow.

Bugs had to wait two years before going solo in the vengeance game in *Phase IV* (75), which extends *Hellstrom's* premise of insect revolution in a realistic scenario. A pseudo-scientific opening reports sudden strange ant behavior: communication and cooperation between formerly warring nests and the disappearance of traditional ant predators in part of the California desert.

Dr. Hobbs (Nigel Davenport) has arranged the construction of an experimental lab in the desert and, with the assistance of electronics whiz James Leaco (Michael Murphy), is determined to get to the bottom of this pesty problem. It's not long before there's out-and-out war between man and insect, with Hobbs blowing the tops off monoliths constructed by the advanced ants.

The movie effectively exploits many of our innate fears about insects. At first, we are repulsed by intimate closeups of the ants, which reveal their grotesque alienness while raising them to human scale. Then they are shown actually burrowing inside humans, eating them from the inside out, which brings up another revulsion—the thought of them invading our bodies. Finally, we are shown the ultimate horror during the film's climax as a character actually begins changing *into* one of them. The film ends on an eerie, metaphysical note hinting at eventual world domination by the new, improved ants and their human cohorts. In fact, "Phase I, II and III" are sepa-



The Soldier Bug



ately all flashed on the screen during the film (which is without opening titles), but "Phase IV" is not, indicating that there's more to come—maybe more anti-slave human zombies. One thing is clearly demonstrated: pitted against sophisticated technology, the ants rapidly adapted and even triumphed. What's keeping them in their holes now? With an unsentimental, semi-documentary tone throughout and many nice sci-fi touches, director Saul Bass delivers one of the better bug movies of the genre.

Several years later, the TV movie *It Happened At Lake Wood Manor* (78; released on video as *Ants*) tackles a similar, but much more modest, situation. This time, the invading insects are only after a lakeside resort and the people staying there: Suzanne Somers, Robert Foxworth and Myrna Loy, among others. The attacks, supposedly spurred on by pesticides and generally sloppy earth management by mankind, are less than realistic—it's hard to see what all the fuss is about. In any case, the insects fail to be much of a threat—it doesn't seem like a problem a few cases of Raid wouldn't remedy.

Newspaper headlines in the mid-to-late 70s ran numerous stories about African "killer" bees. Bigger and more aggressive than the garden-variety honeybee, the Afri-

can species actually killed several dozen people in South America with their abnormally toxic stings and were scheduled to rampage through Central America and into the heart of Texas. Out of the public eye, their threat seems more distant now, although the bees are actually closer to the border. All in all, killer bees are the most likely bug films to come true, at least in some sense.

Something along the lines of *The Swarm* (79) would seem to be more than even the bees could hope for. Produced by Irwin Al-

Battling bugs are usually driven to retribution by man's abuse of the environment.

len, this effort enrolls swarms of actors in a can-you-spot-the-star cast in what's essentially a formula disaster film. It features killer bees who have grown highly intelligent, are fatally poisonous and number easily in the millions. So much where fact leaves off and fiction begins. The buzzers manage to neutralize a missile silo and the small town of Marysville, Texas (probably for the bland irony of its annual Flower Festival) before moving on to bigger and better things: namely a nuclear plant (they cause a meltdown) and the city of Houston.

Michael Caine stars as Dr. Bradford Crane, an entomologist who's tracked the enormous swarm from the start. With the

help of Katherine Ross—who serves as a peripheral love interest—they lure the nasty flying thumbtacks to a convenient body of water with sound, a la *The Beginning of the End*. Oil had previously been dropped in the soup, so it only takes a few of the Army's rockets and voila—bar-bee-que!

If you squint you can spot Bradford Dillman, Henry Fonda, Fred MacMurray, Olivia DeHavilland and Patty Duke Astin trying to figure out what's happening to their careers. Richard Widmark, as the military honcho wins honor, for one of the best lines in the film, "I respect my enemy, whatever it may be."

The bugs easily steal the show, appearing in vast, sky-darkening clouds like a living storm. Sadly, the grim realism ends there: the overuse of "bee blowers" to simulate attacks, overdramatic slow-mo shots of people falling to the street and a deficient script serve more to parody than create fear. Little justice was done to the fine Werner Herzog novel of the same name.

Unintentionally humorous interpretations are often the end result with bug films, and it doesn't help that many are low-budget, "B" films to begin with. *The Bees* (78) suffers from this problem, although the smaller scale tends to make the story seem more probable. John Saxon and John Cusack are after a few hundred renegade African bees that have strayed over the Mexican border. The inscible insects are eventually lured into Houston's Astrodome with a specific bee tone (sound familiar?) and are stunned to death by extreme air conditioning—another victory of American technology. *The Savage Bees* (76) centers on the buzzing stowaways on a banana boat who cut loose in New Orleans, but as with *The Bees*, the film fails to formalize an effective threat. The killer bee films pretty much died out after 1978, presumably having lost their sting.

No insect is more loathed than that favorite household freeloader, the cockroach.



Stealthy menace makes spiders convincing horror heavies.

Hollywood's horror braintrust was itching to come up to the answer to the mega-hit, *Jaws*. It seemed to make perfect sense to adapt a popular horror novel, *The Hephreastus Plaque*, and come up with a catchy, one-word title.

The film features armored, prehistoric roaches that pour out of a surface fissure after an earthquake. These bugs are physically adapted to create fire and are fairly intelligent, knowing precisely where to start small infernos in places like cars and houses. Because they're dying slowly from the difference in air pressure (like a diver getting the bends), there shouldn't be anything to worry about—should there?

James Fennell (Bradford Dillman, who went on to battle ferocious fish in *Arhano*), whose wife is slightly toasted by the crawling matchbooks, decides to breed the bugs with regular cockroaches. In an isolated house, he creates a nasty new species that's even smarter than before and names them after himself. By now, the roaches are smart enough to produce a winged, arsonist bug, but Fennell and the intelligent insects are swallowed up in the original fissure before any real trouble starts. There are some effectively disgusting close-ups of these bugs stuck to people's faces, but overall the film delivers very few chills.

Rapid evolution and a warped, mad-scientist type also play a role in *The Nest* (88). In the quiet seaside town of Northport, residents prepare for the upcoming tourist season and their annual "Fish-A-Whack" festival. Unknown to most folks, however, Mayor Eliza Jackson has made a deal with a heartless super-corporation named Intec to allow

Producer Irwin Allen rallies extras for *The Swarm*.



bazero genetic experiments near the town in exchange for big bucks. Predictably, a few small things go astray, like Sheriff Turbell (Frank Luz) finding a three-inch-long roach splashing around in his coffee. This very effective scene will make insect-phobes swear off liquids forever, with the Sheriff on the verge of taking a sip from the occupied cup several times before discovering its six-legged resident.

Whereas most bug films fizzle off halfway through, this one keeps coming up with thrills and surprises. The ever-mutating roaches literally become what they eat, producing an outrageous cat/roach, and the inevitable... human/roach—fitfully, the mayor becomes a bug. Finally, a "queen" roach is



discovered (another complete fictionalization of nature), an enormous, vague, disgusting beast.

The Nest successfully walks the line between horror and parody, and the comic touches don't detract from the whole. The soundtrack echoes the music from *Jaws*, and the equivalent of a roach-cam is alternatively amusing and terrifying.

Although man wins out by the end of *The Nest*, he's not so lucky in the last of the five segments of *Creepshow* (82). Entitled "They're Creeping Up On You," it deals with a rich clean-freak (E.G. Marshall) who conducts cutthroat business from his sterile penthouse. Naturally, he can't stand bugs. As modern-day Harpies of divine retribution, cockroaches pour out of air vents and drains to give this heavy his comeuppance.

Unintentionally humorous interpretations are often the end result with bug films.

Scripted by Stephen King and directed by George Romero, it maintains a pop, comic-book feel throughout, but succumbs to shallow, revolting gross-out: zillions of bugs swarming a foot deep in a sink, or crawling out of Marshall's mouth—enough is enough.

Kingdom of the Spiders (77) extends the self-motivated bug premise to eight-legged haddies. After humans have sprayed vast areas with DDT, the spiders, who are somehow immune to the chemical, are deprived of their natural diet and go after people instead—did they sense a hum in the cast? Or is it due to a bad sense of humor: confronted by the army of spiders, a tourist, trying to calm his wife, suggests, "It's probably one of those traditions, like the birds coming back to Capistrano."

Unfortunately, cardboard performances by William Shatner (as Dr. Hack Manson) and most of the cast, unenthusiastic spiders and a downright annoying soundtrack doom these creepy crawlers to late-night obscurity. Similar problems with *Tarantulas: The Deadly Cargo* (77) condemn it to the same fate. All in all, formula TV-movie fare that would make most tarantulas lase in their

burrows from shame.

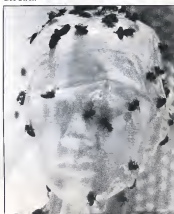
While spiders may come across as the least threatening bugs en masse (after all, they usually live as individuals, not as armies), in the hands of your typical sinister murderer, the situation changes drastically. The introduction of human killers guiding the mini-monsters robs the bugs of their science-fiction qualities of ambition and motivation. No longer hordes of vengeful creatures, they become mere murder weapons.

Still, the inherent detestability of the crawly thing remains. Let's face it: if there's a tarantula creeping up your arm, it doesn't really matter where it came from. It's still a vile, hairy thing that could be easily persuaded to pump you full of poison.

In *The Spider Woman* (44), African arachnids do the bidding of the seductive Gale Sondergaard, dropping in through windows and vents to dispatch well-insured victims. She proves to be a worthy adversary for Sherlock Holmes and Watson (Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce), managing an escape to provide an opening to the practically spider-less sequel *The Spider Woman Strikes Back* (46). Tarantulas do the dirty work in *The Kiss of the Tarantula* (72), at the bidding of their magical mistress, played by Suzanne Munger. Starting on her career as a spider mureessess at an early

Continued on page 77

A goey transformation in *Invasion of the Bee Girls*.



There was a Nightmare at the Mall.
Eric the Phantom Struck.

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NIGHT ANGEL

The ancient she-demon Lilith is bent on the destruction of mankind in Paragon Arts' latest



—By Steve Biodrowski—

Lilith, in her original legend, was Adam's first wife, who left the Garden of Eden because she demanded full equality of him. Angels were sent to threaten the death of her future children unless she returned, but she preferred this punishment to living with Adam, and in revenge she became a child-stealing witch, preying upon newborn babies unless they were protected with a talisman reading: "Adam and Eve: Lilith, avaunt!"

Through the years, her legend grew, and she metamorphosed from a witch into the archetypal *femme fatale*, ever eager to destroy marital bliss and to lure unsuspecting males to their death with her seductive charms. During the 1970s, she even became an icon of certain radical factions of feminists, but for some reason filmmakers have never exploited her story (although she is mentioned in Bert I. Gordon's 1972 release *Necromancy*, starring Orson Welles). That will

change, however, when Paragon Arts International releases *Night Angel* this fall.

The film stars Karen Black as Rita, publisher of a hip magazine infiltrated by Lilith (Isa Andersen), who wants her photograph to appear on the cover so that everyone who sees it will fall under her spell. Linden Ashby (*Werewolf*) and Debra Feuer (*To Live and Die in L.A.*) are the young ingenues whose love is threatened by the ancient monster. Special make-up effects were provided by Steve Johnson's FX, Incorporated and by the KNB Company, which stands for Boh Kurtzman, Greg Nicotero and Howard Berger. The score is by Corey Lerios, of Pablo Cruise fame, the script is by Joe Augustyn and Walter Josten and the director is Dominique Othenin-Girard, making his U.S. debut after three features in Europe.

Night Angel is the third horror film produced by Paragon Arts, the first two being *Witchboard* and *Night of the Demons*. The company was formed two years ago by Walter Josten, a commo-

dities investor with a commercial art background. "I had heard about people financing films the way we did it in the commodities market—you're dealing with investors who want to take a shot and hope it hits big. I thought, they've got to love a film investment: it's risky; it's speculative; there's a good chance for the upside, and the downside, with video and cable, is buffered. So we went out and looked for a script and came up with *Oxia*, written by Kevin Tenney, who wanted to direct. I liked his philosophy: he wasn't an artsy-craftsy director; he wanted to do a film that was gonna do some business. We formed a limited partnership, produced the film and went out and shopped it."

The result was *Witchboard*, an above-average supernatural thriller whose \$2.3-million investment recouped \$8 million at the box office. This impressive result convinced Josten to attempt a second horror film, *Night of the Demons*, a \$2.7-million investment that traded away much of the charm of *Witchboard* in favor of a more extensive use of graphic



Left: Lisa Anderson as Lilith wants the whole world to fall under her spell.
Above: Linden Ashby in cradle of death.

special effects. "You have to believe you're selling to a certain audience; otherwise, don't make the movie," said Josten, who admitted, "*Night of the Demons* tends to—if I may use the word—pander a little more to its audience. It doesn't have the story *Witchboard* does, but it has great special effects. We went more for that target kid audience."

Josten's target audience paid off, turning *Night of the Demons* into a solid commercial success, which helped him to increase the budget of *Night Angel* to \$4 million. "*Night Angel* is head and shoulders above both pictures, because we put more money into it," said Josten. "It has many more interesting special effects than *Night of the Demons*. It has every bit of the story, and even more, than *Witchboard*. It goes deep into mythology without getting heavy-handed. We've got 150 opticals, so it really looks like a big picture."

The story of *Night Angel* was the brainchild of Joe Augustyn, who also produced and wrote *Night of the Demons*. A fan of old horror movies, Augustyn wanted to create a horror villain based on mythology, as Bram Stoker did with *Dracula*. "I did a lot of research," he said. "I read tons of books. I had known about Lilith for a long time, through friends who were radical lesbian feminists in the early 70s. The more I researched, the more Lilith seemed a natural."

Augustyn pitched the idea to Josten, who immediately liked it. "When Joe presented it, I thought this idea was really good—to have a villainess steeped in reality," Josten

explained. "This person may not be real, but you can look her up in the dictionary and read about her in the encyclopedia, and there's a lot of lore that's never been exploited on film before."

Augustyn's first draft script then went through extensive revision under the supervision of Josten before the search for a director started. Josten and Augustyn had narrowed their search down to four when Dominique Othenin-Girard popped in on a fluke. He had been in the country only a few months and was introduced to them by his apartment manager, who had written a script for Paragon Arts.

"He had the best ideas, seemed the most enthusiastic, and really understood the subject matter," said Augustyn. "Ironically, when we had first started talking about a director, we were thinking maybe Paul Verhoeven—we wanted a European director who would bring a level of sophistication to the film. A lot of

Augustyn wanted to create a horror villain based on myths, as Stoker did with *Dracula*.

Another succubus chews on her favorite dish.



young American directors come out of film school with certain limitations, especially in the area of sex. It seems anything sexual they lump into T&A. We thought Dominique could bring in the sexuality without being tacky."

Girard was given a copy of the script and shown two previous Paragon Arts films, *Night of the Demons* and *Tips*, the latter a comedy. Said Girard, "I was impressed by the goodwill but not the manufacture of *Tips*. I thought *Night of the Demons* was a pretty straightforward, exploitative movie. That disturbed me in a way. I thought it was very empty, but I liked in some way the manufacture of the film."

Girard continued, "We had a five-hour meeting after the two films, in which they expected me to analyze the films and the script. The script I thought was rather weak, having no real hero nor goal to the hero. Walter, Joe and Jeff (Geoffrey, supervising producer) said, 'How interesting!' instead of 'How dare he!' We immediately started to work on it."

Girard, whose stepfather is an archeologist, was already familiar with many of the world's ancient myths, including Lilith, and he used that background to help give input to the script. "What was fascinating for me was the (notion of) two kinds of sexuality: the one that links Adam and Eve, where male and female link together in order to reach God, and the other kind, more supported by Lilith, which is just lust, sexual pleasure to manipulate. What was also fascinating was the fact that she is a legendary figure. I dug into the legend in order to find im-

Steve Johnson oversees FX crew prepping Doug Jones for his big love scene with Lilith.



Helen Martin tries to fend off the demon.

ages for the film to motivate myself on how to portray this woman."

The scripting sessions continued for three weeks while the film was simultaneously going through pre-production planning. "After three weeks, I felt that we regressed," recalled Girard. "Unfortunately, a lot of these images never

Whether *Night Angel* overemphasizes special effects remains to be seen.

made it into the film. I found a lot of restriction on the side of Walter Josten, who thought that some of these ideas were too European, too weird. I don't think they were, but he was a more conservative figure. I believe sometimes he is imitating too many successful films, instead of going for the original film. That was our conflict. He wanted to apply not

only one formula, but mix several formulas into the same film, which I didn't think was working too well. I was suggesting to him to be simpler about it... But who cares? The film will speak for itself."

The next hurdle was casting the part of Lilith. "We wanted to use an actress that we'd never seen before, who could be anybody, because Lilith takes many forms," said Josten. Dominique Girard added, "I didn't want to go for the simple bimbo who could lift up her skirt and take off her bra. That was not the point; the point was the charisma."

Finally, after literally hundreds of actresses were auditioned, Isa Anderson was chosen. "Some actresses who came in were incredible knockouts until someone tried to direct them to be seductive, and then they were like little girls," said Augustyn. "We were really lucky to get Isa. She really got what we were trying to do. She read books about Lilith. She is elegant and very sensual. She was a

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BUGS

Continued from page 12

age, she later commands legions of hairy, crawly things to swarm her human enemies.

Italian director Dario Argento gave the bug-weapon motif his own intriguing twist. *Creepers* (82) features yet another female bug manipulator, but this time she's telepathic—she controls her minuscule minions by will. Unfortunately, the psychic philly only summons up clouds of black, whirling flies a few times in the film. Most of *Creepers* deals with the threat of the head mistress' worry, demon-headed child, who is prone to slasher binges with a medieval pike. Argento (who co-scripted as well) tries to incorporate too much into too little, throwing in wheelchair-bound entomologist John McGregory (Donald Pleasence) and his super-smart chimp companion in the bargain. With such a rogues' gallery of characters hogging the screen, it's no wonder the bugs seem unimpressive.

Armed with venomous stingers and a kamikaze strategy, bees provide their own built-in alibi; after all, while accidental death

terror, wrote the script as a whodunit (instead of a sci-fi entry), giving this bug film an added dimension.

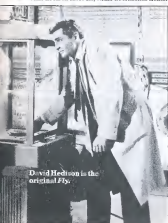
As the matriarch of a sprawling family in *The Killer Bees* (74), a predictable and largely ineffectual thriller, Gloria Swanson has an emotional stake in her hive of rare and exotic bees, which are not so cleverly concealed in the attic of her house. Swanson's payoff from her bee-loved creatures is being physically incorporated in the hive, eventually being transformed into an ultimate queen bee.

Atacking bugs come in many shapes and sizes, but they are external influences from which there can always be an escape. But man-insect transformation flicks bring up a more resounding fear by incorporating the detestable bug and all its awful attributes in its victim, making the horror unavoidable and all the more intimate.

Unfortunately for writers, melding humans and bugs together isn't all that easy to make into a credible affair. When Franz Kafka first tackled the idea in 1915 with his story, "The Metamorphosis," he avoided any scientific explanation, concentrating instead

between human and insect impulses, one of the more intriguing concepts advanced, is dealt with only briefly. This is not to say that it is not occasionally effectively portrayed, as when Andre's ugly gleaming fly claw attacks his human hand.

More than 25 years later, David Cronenberg's remake, *The Fly* (86), taps into the implications of this initial concept and successfully exploits the viler side of the bug-man while updating the story into a modern social tragedy. In a sad-yet-humorous tribute to the man he once was, the slowly transforming Seth Brundle's medicine cabinet is stocked with shed body parts—ears, fingers and a nose that belonged to another species, almost an altar to his lost self. At one point Brundle says, "I am an insect who dreamt he was a man," a twisted homage to Kafka's story. Brundle's enduring humanity throughout his bodily decay, which alludes to the effects of cancer and the AIDS virus infesting society, is the chief tragedy of the film. Emotions are taken full circle as Cronenberg leaves no stone unturned: We also view Brundle through the eyes of the woman who loves him, Veronica (Geena Davis, Goldblum's



David Hedison is the original *Fly*.

The Fly films are tangents of the mad-scientist genre, blending experimenter and creature in one being.

on the bizarre agony of a salesman finding himself in a bug's body. Throughout his experience, Gregor Samsa has no idea why he's become an insect, and he dies slowly and miserably. The enduring tale has been made into a Swedish film (73) and was recently adapted as a play by Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Probably the most notorious and well-known transformation films are the two series of *The Fly*. Numbering five with their sequels, these movies are fascinating tangents of the mad-scientist genre, blending the experimenter and his creature into one being.

The original *The Fly* (58), based on a George Langelaan story, focuses on Andre Delambre (David "Al" Hedison), co-owner of the Montreal-based family business with his brother Francois (Vincent Price) and basement researcher. Andre's got a lovely family, a nice house and a crazy idea about the teleportation of matter. After some mixed results (including the disintegration of the family cat), he eagerly slips into a teleportation chamber himself, not noticing a housefly in the booth with him. Their molecules mingle, resulting in an enormous fly head and arm on Andre and a fly sporting tiny versions of Andre's appendages. He wears a cloth draped over his hideous, spiny head, and his human will internally battles the fly's savage nature, but it's all a losing battle to retain his humanity. Andre's battle



real-life wife) enduring affection for Brundle as he degenerates from man to monster demonstrates that, aside from occasional fits of madness, the person inside the creature is the same. She runs the full gamut of human emotion, from fascination to repulsion to fear, and Cronenberg further tightens the dramatic tension with an over-the-top dream sequence of her giving birth to a squirming, two-foot-long maggot.

Inside this savage monster still lurks the soul of Brundle, signified by a final heart-rending posture. His end isn't the usual elation of a victory over ultimate evil that's portrayed in most horror films. Brundle's refusal to surrender his humanity chests the influence of a clean finale. There's no immediate

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Claude Rains

Famous for his voice in *The Invisible Man*, he fleshed out many memorable performances in the genre

By Jeff Gherman

I don't care what he looks like, that's the voice I want!" These were the words of director James Whale after having viewed Claude Rains' "failed" screen test for the 1933 version of H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*.

His mellifluous and menacing voice would come first, long before his face and manner. From the bandages of the "Invisible One" would emerge one of the finest actors ever to grace the screen. Rains could be the atypical villain—sneaky, witty and sarcastically cutting, but he could also be someone sympathetic and urbane. He has said of himself: "I can play the butcher, the baker or the candlestick maker." For 30 years, he graced the screen as a star and a leading character actor, bringing his elegance to such great and near-great films as *Casablanca*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, *Noon*, *Voyager*, *Mr. Sheffington*, *Caesar*, *Noon*, *Cleopatra*, *Notorious* and many, many more.

He portrayed the Phantom in a sympathetic light—a man almost pathetic in his obsessions.

Claude Rains was born on November 11, 1889 in South London, the son of Frederick Rains, a well-known stage player. At the age of 11, he made his first stage appearance in *Sweet Nell of Old Drury*. The experience led Rains to a job as a two-dollar-a-week call-boy at His Majesty's The-



tre, where he subsequently rose through the ranks to become a prompter, a stage and company manager and—when necessary—an actor.

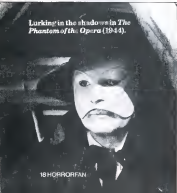
For many years he played small parts in companies which toured Britain, Australia and America. In 1915 the young actor joined a Scottish regiment to fight in the first World War. Upon returning in 1919, he won public acclaim on the London stage in *The Government Inspector* and *Julius Caesar*, as well as critical acclaim for such disparate roles as Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny* and Dick in *The Devil's Disciple*. While most actors slept days, Rains taught at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. One of his fledgling students, John Gielgud, would warmly praise him years later as both a teacher and an actor.

Many British thespians were wooed to come to America and take the chance of

their lives with the caprices of the New York stage, but soon after Rains arrived in 1926 to star in *The Constant Nymph* he became a renowned Broadway player. After a string of commercial and critical successes, including *Volpone*, *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head* and *The Good Earth*, Rains looked for the first time to Hollywood. Yet, when he tested for what would be John Barrymore's role in *A Bill of Divorcement*, he was turned down as unlikely film material.

But James Whale's decision to cast a voice instead of a face proved to be the right one. Rains as the *Invisible Man* would play almost the entire film swathed in bandages and gloves. Thanks to the special effects department, a pair of disembodied trousers danced down the lane, a cigarette dangled in the air, a bicycle peddled by itself, but the honey-coated voice, edged in steel, lent the dis-

Lurking in the shadows in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1944).





Rains as the transparent mad scientist in *The Invisible Man*.

logue of R.C. Sheriff a brilliant new edge of caustic self-awareness. When Rains intoned, "Even the moon is frightened of me, frightened to death, the whole world is frightened to death," the heart of the American public shivered in delicious recognition.

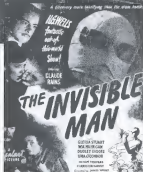
Rains portrays Jack Griffen, a research scientist who becomes invisible when he injects himself with the drug monocoine. While working to find an antidote, he goes mad, overtaken by megalomania. "The drug seemed to light up my brain,"

Believing *The Invisible Man* would be a failure, Rains returned to Broadway.

his character explains, "suddenly I realized the power I have, the power to rule, to make the world grovel at my feet!" Griffen then goes on a reign of terror through the countryside, robbing and killing. Eventually, he is brought to his end by a snowstorm—he is betrayed by his footprints in the snow (this was a glaring mistake that would not be noticed for decades, for the footprints are not of the Invisible Man's feet, but of his shoes). As he lies dying, Griffen utters the words of remorse of all future mad scientists: "I meddled in things that man must leave alone." Drawing his dying last breaths, Griffen—more importantly, Rains—appears for the first time, revealing the man behind the voice.

Believing that the film would be a failure, Rains returned to Broadway to star in *They Shall Not Die*. But *The Invisible Man* was a huge success and established Rains as an actor in demand in Hollywood.

In his first "visible" screen role, Rains starred in *Crime Without Passion* as an unscrupulous lawyer who ends his affair



with a Spanish dancer by killing her so that he can marry a socialite. Unfortunately, the corpse does not cooperate. Following on the heels of this film, Rains recreated his stage role in *The Man Who Reclaimed His Head*, the story of a writer (Rains) being unscrupulously used by his publisher (Lionel Atwill) to sell out his ideals, while the publisher dallies with the writer's wife behind his back. It's all brought to a swift conclusion as Rains reclaims his professional integrity... along with the publisher's head.

Rains seemed destined to play madness on the screen, the next time as John Jasper, the opium-addicted choirmaster who murders his nephew because of his passion for the nephew's fiancée, in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. It was a role in which Rains was given the opportunity to show everyone what a good actor he was. *The New York Times* called him "brilliantly repellent."

In 1936, Rains signed a long-term contract with Warner Brothers and began what would be a long and happy association. His first role at Warner's was as the thoroughly villainous Don Luis in the sweeping and compelling drama, *Anthony Adverse*. With this character Rains perfected the persona that would echo in all his future villains—all touched with wit and deadly treachery.

Rains was the only star in a riveting condemnation of prejudice and bigotry in the Deep South in *They Won't Forget*. He gave a powerful performance as a ruthless prosecuting attorney who uses the murder of a 15-year-old girl by a Northern school teacher to launch him into the governor's chair, a stunt he pulls off by fanning the flames of hatred.

In 1938, Claude Rains joined forces with Basil Rathbone, yet another expert in villainy, to bring Errol Flynn to "justice" in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. In the film, Prince John leaves his brother, King Richard, to rot in prison, and eventually attempts to assassinate him. No-one but Rains, superb as the sly and treacherous Prince, could have delivered the following line genuinely: "But Richard... Richard... I didn't mean to—after all, I am your brother."

Rains was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actor for his performance as Senator Joseph Payne in Frank Capra's *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (sadly, he was nominated four times in all, but never won). He turned in a masterful performance in *Mr. Smith* as a man battling conscience over corruption. After his conscience gets the better of him, he tries to shoot himself. He confesses his guilt before the prostrate Jefferson Smith: "Everything that boy said is the truth! Every word about Taylor and me and graft and the rotten political corruption in my state."

Rains rang in the new decade of the 40s as the black-gosteed Don Jose Alvarez,

In *Casablanca*, Rains plays the endearing Captain Renault.





Consulting with Maria Ouspenskaya in *The Wolf Man* and (below) bringing the silver cane down on Lon Chaney, Jr.



the plotting Spanish ambassador in Errol Flynn's *The Sea Hawk*. He then returned to Universal for the horror classic, *The Wolf Man*, with Lon Chaney, Jr., who was carrying on in the family tradition.

As Sir John Talbot, Rains suffers through his son Larry's (Chaney) delirium of believing he is a wolfman. But it's no mere raving, for "when the autumn moon is bright" Chaney does change into a wolfman who terrorizes the village. Ironically, it is Sir John who kills the creature—his son—with Larry's own silver cane, the same cane Chaney had used to kill the werewolf that had originally bit him. The

The best—and worst — of Rains' previous characterizations came out in *Casablanca*.

gypsy woman, Maleva, played by Maria Ouspenskaya, recites over Talbot's prone body: "The way you walk is thorny, through no fault of your own; for as the rain enters the soil and evil enters the soul, so tears run to their predestined end. Your suffering is over; now find peace for eternity, my son." And with these spell-

binding words, Chaney transforms in death from wolf to man.

Meanwhile at Warner's, Rains was once more on the marincal roll in *King's Row*, a grim and tragic romance set in a small Midwestern town and filled with sadism, madness and murder. As Dr. Alexander Tower, Rains hides the dark secret of his wife's insanity from everyone, though unfortunately he sees the same dark fate manifesting itself in his daughter. In a desperate attempt to save her from her destiny, he murders her and then himself.

Rains again played a physician—this time a psychiatrist—Dr. Jaquith, to Bette Davis' metamorphic Charlotte Vale in the beautifully moving *Near, My Neighbor*. The critics at the time lauded this performance as "impeccable."

The best—and the worst—traits of all Rains' previous characterizations came to fruition in the film *Casablanca*. Rains was ideal as the cynical, witty, corrupt Vichy police chief Louis Renault; it was, perhaps, his perfect role. Again, he was nominated and passed over for an Academy Award. But he had delivered enduring dialogue in a film which has stood the test of time: "I've often speculated on why you didn't return to America. Did you run off with a senator's wife? Did you abscond with the church funds? I like to think you killed a man. That's the romantic in me." In this role, Rains created what is easily his most endearing piece of screen villainy.

In 1944, Claude Rains stepped into the horror genre again, in the remake of Lon Chaney, Sr.'s *The Phantom of the Ope-*



70 In the film adapted from Gaston Leroux's original story, Rains portrayed the Phantom in a more sympathetic light—a man almost pathetic in his obsession with the young singer, Christine. Chaney's *Phantom* had been a more frightening creature in a tale far blacker by comparison to the Rains remake. (Of note in the remake is the emphatic musical score, notable since the film featured Nelson Eddy and Suzanne Foster.)

In *Phantom*, Rains played Erique Claudin, a violinist who kills a music publisher because he believes the man has stolen his compositions. The publisher's mistress throws a tray of acid in Claudin's face, trying to stop his murderous act. Driven insane by the pain, Erique escapes into the sewers of Paris. He settles down in the tunnels under the Paris Opera House—a disfigured and embittered man who seeks revenge on all who wronged

him. He also devotes himself to helping the career of a young singer (Foster) by killing off the divas ahead of her, thus opening up their roles.



In the *Unsuspected*, he was not only calm, cool and collected, but also got caught in the end.

causes a cave-in in his underground lair, burying him under the rubble. As the film reviewer for *Look* magazine saw it, "although Claude Rains' *Phantom* may disappoint some old Chaney fans, it is only because there is less ham in Rains, more actor."

George Bernard Shaw chose Rains personally, along with Vivian Leigh, to play the leads in the film version of his *Caesar and Cleopatra*. As Caesar, Rains would be the first actor to ever receive one million dollars for his part, and he was worth every cent of it in his masterful and witty portrayal of the formidable Roman monarch.

Rains was next directed by Alfred Hitchcock in *Notorious*. He played the wealthy Nazi sophisticate, Alexander Sebastian, who would be duped by Ingrid Bergman and Cary Grant. The film was a blend of sensuality and South American espionage that proved to be "bottled dyna-

mite." Rains received his last Academy Award nomination for his brilliant portrayal of Sebastian.

His next two pieces of screen villainy were perhaps his most vicious. In *Devotion*, Rains is an egomaniacal composer who goes over the edge when he discovers the woman he loves in another man's arms. In *The Unsuspected*, Rains played a writer/producer of radio crime dramas who—after what he considers to be the broadcast of a perfect murder—re-enacts it. Rains was not only calm, cool and collected, but also caught in the end.

At this point, Rains left Warner's to freelance, but his success was not all that great. In H.G. Wells' *The Passionate Friends*, he played the cold and spiteful husband of Ann Todd. Although Rains gave a strong performance, the film was not a success.

In 1931 Rains made a triumphant return to his first love, the stage, in the dramatization of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. His performance as the old Bolshevik who was imprisoned, forced to admit doctrinal errors and executed, won him the Best Actor award by the New York Drama Critics.

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Cary Grant unmasks Rains' treachery in Hitchcock's *Notorious*.



In a magnificent scene of climactic tension, Claudin saws the suspension chains of a chandelier hanging above the orchestra seats of the opera house, sending it crashing onto the audience. He captures Christine in the ensuing panic and tells her they will live together and she will become a great singer under his tutelage. But Claudin's dreams are rudely dashed when he is finally tracked down. He meets his end when the concussion from a shot

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Brinke Stevens

A "Scream Queen" enjoys her role as a perennial victim

Brinke Stevens



Katherine Hepburn never played a scene while she was held down by robots, naked, on a dissecting table, but I have. Meryl Streep never got ripped up by sorority-girl demons in a dark, spooey bowling alley, either. Of course not: they aren't "Scream Queens" like myself, B-movie heroines who make up a special class of actresses. Together with ladies like my friend and contemporary, Linnea Quigley, we are the modern-day incarnation of the glamorous Scream Queens of yesteryear: Mary Philbin, Fay Wray, Elsa Lanchester, Ingrid Pitt, Barbara Steele, Martine Beswick, Caroline Munro and (most recently) Jamie Lee Curtis.

Scream Queens are essential to horror movies. We are the traditional damsels in distress, women petrified, awaiting rescue by a dashing hero. (Unfortunately, however, in recent movies the heroes tend not to arrive on time. I've died a lot recently waiting for Mister Right.) Without us you would never have the fear and tension, jumps and startles you do in the movie theater. You sit terrified that we, these beautiful women, will die; you want to shout, "Don't go in there!" Secretly, you know that if you were in our place, you'd probably act the same way we do.

"For some reason, getting drilled to death made my character stand out in the picture."

My first "Scream Queen" appearance was in Roger Corman's *Slumber Party Massacre* (1983). It was exhaustingly hard work for excessively long hours and shockingly little pay. But I loved every moment of it. I'd found my niche in life. Directed by a young woman, Amy Jones, and written by another woman, Rita Mae Brown, *Slumber Party Massacre* was considered by some to be the first ever "feminist" slasher film. My character was slain early on, trapped in the girls' locker room by a psychopath wielding an immense electric drill with a savage, 12-inch bit. Rather than show the gory details of my very bloody demise, they decided to let my scream tell the boorish story. So the scream had to be perfect. The sound man and I went outside in the middle of a quiet suburban neighborhood. It wasn't any wimpy, "eek, eek!" scream they wanted. I needed to come on

strong, sustain with perfect modulation and fade off naturally. I screamed for about 45 minutes before they were satisfied with what they called "the perfect scream." What the neighbors thought, I don't know, but I certainly would have called the police! For some odd reason, getting drilled to death made my character stand out in the picture.

A *Slumber Party Massacre* fan sent me a fluffy pink towel in honor of the shower scene. I think I have done more shower scenes than any actress in Hollywood. Nudity has never bothered me, though it is frustrating when it is the reason you are hired. Since most horror films are low-budget productions, sometimes they forget to build each role with character. It bothers me that often I will get paid more if I show a little more skin than if I don't. It seems that when you first work in films, the fans love you for your look (so nudity is helpful in catching their eye). But as you improve as an actress and the fans come to know you, they are more interested in your involvement with the story. (Oh, they still enjoy a tease now and then...)





One of my favorite projects was *Attack of the B-Movie Monster*. It was directed by Wayne Berwick, an appropriate choice since his father, Irwin Berwick, directed *The Monster of Piedras Blancas* in 1959. Ted Newsom, the film's writer, came to me and asked me to appear. His goal was to bring together some of the classic stars of B-movies: Ken Tobey, John Agar, Gloria Talbot, Ann Robinson, Robert Shayne, Forrest J. Ackerman and many others. I represented the B-movies of the 80s, though my role was definitely 50s: the beautiful marine biologist whom no one takes seriously until the 100-foot Creature-saurus attacks. Gloria Talbot played my mother trying to get me married off, an amusing notion since she *Married a Monster From Outer Space*. Most of my screen time was spent working with Ken Tobey, who is one of the nicest and most professional actors I have worked with.

"It's very frustrating when a movie you've done doesn't get the attention it deserves."

During this period, I branched out beyond acting into areas I've been interested in since my childhood. Local publisher Brian Forbes had bought the title rights to *Weird Tales* magazine and he hired me as the magazine's production executive. Ron Cobb was art director and Ted Newsom was senior editor.

Because the magazine was just starting up, we could only hire a few top-name writers, like Harlan Ellison and Stephen King. But I wanted to include A.E. Van Vogt; I had loved his books as a young girl. He is a delightfully creative man. We came up with a rough story outline, which I developed into a three-part serial called *The Pandora Principle*. Dave Stevens did the artwork. I posed for the cover painting of Pandora Markus, the title character.

In 1986 I became Evil, the vampiric editorial mascot for *Monsterland* magazine. The publishers were searching for the right woman to bring her to life, and I fit the bill. I wrote all of Evil's material, answered the fan mail, did public appearances at book stores, conventions and amusement parks around Southern California. I was pleased to discover that people knew me for my films as well as recognizing me as the mysterious woman who graced three *Monsterland* covers.



The imperiled pair of *Nightmare Sisters*.

In 1987, my Empire Pictures/Dave DeCoteau period, I completed several leading roles in rapid succession; I played in *Slave Girls From Beyond Infinity*, *Scorcity Babes In The Slimeball Bowl-A-Rama* and *Nightmare Sisters*. During *Slave Girls From Beyond Infinity*, we were trapped in a huge warehouse in the San Fernando Valley, which was made to look like a dense jungle with potted plants and lots of smoke. I hate smoky movies! The crew stands around in those white painters' masks, while the actors have to concentrate on acting without coughing or having our eyes tear up. Every chance I got, I would sneak across the street to John Boechler's special-effects studio to see what new horrors the master had invented.

The script was based on *The Most Dangerous Game*, a movie starring the most famous of all Scream Queens, Fay Wray. Coincidentally, the log bridge scenes were copied from another Fay Wray classic, *King Kong*. Admittedly, I was beginning to feel a lot like Fay Wray myself. I had been chained in a dungeon, chased



The author with fellow scream queen, Lianesa Quigley.

through a threatening jungle with beasts on my trail—and here I was running barefoot across that tiny log over a deep chasm in a skimpy chamois bikini. This must have been every boy's dream!

Charles Rand, the genius behind Empire Pictures, had such amazing success with the wild title *Slave Girls From Beyond Infinity* that he changed the title of my next movie from *The Imp to Sorcity Babes In The Slimeball Bowl-A-Rama*. It was the first of two films I have done with David DeCoteau, a young director with immense talent. He paired me with Lianesa Quigley. Lianesa and I were constantly auditioning for the same TV pilots, and we'd always wanted to work together. We saw ourselves as a potential "girl-buddies" team!

Dave DeCoteau also directed me in *Nightmare Sisters*. Lianesa and I were again cast as a duo—or now a trio, including Michelle Bauer-McClellan. The script was tailored for us; delightfully, it was a breeze to work with these two ladies. The possession sequences in the film let me play a wide range of characters, from a nerd to a whip-cracking dominatrix. And I guess bathtub scenes will never quite be the same after that movie!

Fred Olen Ray was one of the top horror-film directors I had always wanted to work with. He called me in 1988 for a role in *Warlords*, a part he felt was perfect for me. I played David Carmadine's kidnapped wife. A long-time fan of the *Kung Fu* TV show, I greatly respected David and was a little nervous about playing opposite him. From the first rehearsal, David put me at ease, at least until the scene where I was chained to a cross. Some time afterwards, Fred came to me saying he'd just seen *Slave Girls*. "What is it with you, Brinke," Fred asked, "always getting chained up? Do you ask for these parts?!"

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Costume design by Elizabeth Kaplan and Lianesa Quigley. Photo by Beal in *Slave Girls From Beyond Infinity*.

HALLOWEEN

A large, atmospheric photograph of Michael Myers, the iconic character from the Halloween franchise. He is wearing his signature white, featureless mask and a dark, long-sleeved shirt. He is holding a large, curved, blood-stained knife or scythe across his body. The background is dark and moody, with some light reflecting off the knife's blade. The number '5' is superimposed on the right side of the image, indicating this is the fifth installment in the series.

5

You can't keep a good ghouel down—Michael Myers and sidekick Donald Pleasence play slice & dice one more time.

—By Daniel Schweiger—

On a cold June night, Michael Myers' ominous shadow fell across two teenagers as they fooled around in a barn loft. As they innocently frolicked, the killer grew nearer. While similar moments of bloody tenderness have occurred in dozens of thrillers, rarely are they accomplished with the diffused gothic lighting and suspenseful restraint that marks *Halloween V*.

As could be guessed, these unfortunate kids weren't alone. Dozens of technicians were crammed among the straw and sharp farm implements. They wore industrial-strength face masks, but still suffered from hayfever. The Shape threw knives and practiced with a scythe as he waited for the call of "Action!" Make-up artist Greg Nicotero checked out his spring-loaded pitchfork appliance. Director Dominique

Othenin-Girard nervously checked out a steadicam. The atmosphere's tenseness increased with the quick passage of vital time. The production was under the butcher knife to get the three-million-dollar *Halloween V* finished for its Friday, October 13th release date. This deadline generated a desperate camaraderie among the crew, almost as if the real Shape were expected to burst in and slaughter them all if they didn't finish on schedule.

Nothing will stop this vengeful spirit of All Hallow's Eve, who at last film's conclusion was blasted by shotguns and hurtled down a mine shaft. Unfortunately, its pit is far from bottomless, as will be discovered at the beginning of *Halloween V*. The Shape is knocked into suspended animation and later recovered by the deranged hermit Doctor Death (Theron Read). A year later on October 31st, Michael awakens to strangle Death and go after his little

nicce Jamie (Danielle Harris), whom he had previously enticed to stab her mother. Now Jamie is psychically linked to the Shape, able to see through his eyes as he kills Rachel (Ellie Cornell), Jamie's half-sister who helped her to survive Michael's last rampage. Only the scarred Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasence), veteran of three of the four previous *Halloween* films, realizes the mystical connection between the nine-year-old and her murderous relative, and attempts to use Jamie's talents to stop Michael before another generation of Haddonfield, Illinois teens are carved up at a Halloween party.

It will be too late, of course, for the two in the hayloft (Tamara Glynn and Matthew Walker), who prepared for their rude coitus interruptus as the lighting cranes finally got into position. Dressed in a revealing devil costume, Tamara couldn't wait for her futile battle with the Shape. "Of

Two police officers react to gun shots at the Haddonfield police station where Myers is being held.



Danielle Harris reacts to the mass murders at the Haddonfield police station.

course he's attracted to me," she commented. "After all, he's a man, and Michael can get very jealous."

The blank-faced apparition gave a muffled breath of agreement and removed his world-famous mask. Underneath was the cheerful visage of Don Shanks, best known as Nicita, the Indian compatriot of TV's Grizzly Adams. Though Shanks wore a faceplate for *Revenge of the Ninja*, it wasn't nearly as challenging as playing a character who's defined by his chilling immobility. "Hiding behind a mask is very difficult, because you have to be very subtle, slow and deliberate to go with the Shape's ability to merge into shadows," Don explained. "I'm not a bad person, so I have to get into a very childlike mood to play him. Michael is still a six-year-old, but in an adult's body. No matter how demented he gets, he still thinks that what he's doing is right. I don't think he's evil, either. Killing is just something that the Shape has to do. I'll be making him a lot more emotional in this one, more human than he wants to be. Michael even gets to cry."

The project is under the butcher knife to be finished by the Friday, October 13th release date.

"He's not Michael anymore, just the Shape," Greg Nicotero said as he touched up the smudged white mask. A protégé of George Romero and Tom Savini, Nicotero helped apply make-up for some of the decade's most popular horror films, among them *Day of the Dead* and *Child's Play*. Now he runs KNB Productions with Robert Kurtzman and Howard Berger, who were back in LA with *Bride of the Animator* and *Nightmare V*. He and assistant Mark Maitre had been left to handle effects that popped up with the unexpected frequency of Shape victims. "A lot of what we're doing is last minute," he remarked. "We only had two weeks to put the make-up together for this film."

Nicotero was spared embedding a scythe in Tinseltown's head. It was just decided that the effect would be done in silhouette, and Greg was happy, a bizarre reaction considering that some of his best work for *Horror Show* fell prey to the MPAA's meat cleaver. "The *Halloween* series is about suspense, not violence," he commented. "We're only going to show the most powerful deaths, and only for a few seconds. That helps with the ratings board as well. You've got to remember that the Shape isn't like Jason, who hacks everyone to pieces, or Freddy, who'll make a wise-crack before he does it. Michael is about stalking people. There wasn't one drop of blood in the original, and that's why everyone says it's their favorite. The main ef-

fects for *Halloween V* will be a pitchfork through the chest and a garden weeder in the head." Craig then showed the false torso and head he's built for the "gags." It's almost a shame that viewers won't get to dwell on their astonishing realism.

Halloween V's most obvious return to its disturbing roots appears in the Shape's mask, a virtual recreation of the original created for *Star Trek's* William Shatner. "The only difference is that we've built onto the nose a bit," Nicotero remarked. "And we were still sculpting it the night before production was due to begin. Loomis' barn make-up will also be expanded upon, so you can see how totally disfigured he was after *II*'s explosion. Donald Pleasence even requested a scene where he'd roll up his sleeves to show the scars. He wanted more than just a little burn on his cheek.

But the producers are still debating if they'll show what happened to the Shape's face."

Nicotero pointed to Dominique, who was directing Tina (Wendy Kaplan) on how to chase a kitten around some hen stalls, the Shape tantalizingly close by. "This scene is going to terrify audiences, because the Shape is five feet behind her, and they're not going to be sure if he's going to get Tina right there with a knife."

The shot went off perfectly. Though his lighting and action set-ups were painstakingly slow, the payoff was more than worth it. Dominique, having previously shot such noir-ish pictures as *After Darkness* and *Night Angel*, Dominique's Hitchcockian technique impressed producer Moustapha Akkad enough to make

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Donald Pleasence (below) as Dr. Loomis has make-up applied following his fight with Myers.





CARNIVAL OF SOULS

Nearly 30 years after its debut, Herk Harvey's first film still rates as an unnerving masterpiece of horror and suspense

By Bill George

There are horror movies and there are splatter movies. Splatter movies appeal to an undernourished imagination that habitually turns to pig entrails and karo syrup as a surrogate for a story. Horror movies evoke a disciplined orchestration of audience emotions and impulses (namely, *fear*). Today's horror films, then, qualify as such only in a generic capacity, as most are really thinly disguised splatter movies.

Genocide, *Re-Animator* and *Evil Dead* are among the rare splatter exceptions, as they burlesque their own hoary stories and trendy carnage by digressing from the clinical reality of violence and drifting into surrealism. Explicit violence, howev-



er, a catalyst for "cheap shock" sans suspense, is a contradiction of classical horror. *Psycho* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which are traditional in contrast to the splatter clones, generated so much intensity that theater patrons swore they

saw more carnage than had actually transpired on-screen. For horror movies also project a more restrained—but very potent—intrusion on the psyche, something that trivializes the jolts, "buses" and shocks: awareness of our own mortality. And *Carnival of Souls* is the consummate horror film, because its fatalistic premise is entirely credible: You can't cheat death.

A couple of good ol' boys challenge three young women to a drag race. The competing cars speed across a bridge but the race abruptly concludes when the vehicle carrying the female passengers bursts through a rail and plunges into the river. Police search for the girls, but neither the car nor the bodies can be found. Within three hours after the tragic acci-



The girls' car is accidentally forced through a bridge rail, plunging into the river below. Searchers find no trace of the car, and yet hours later one of the girls makes her way to a sand bar.

dent, one of the women, Mary Henry (Candace Hilligoss), emerges from the river and climbs onto a sand bar where several rescuers await her.

"Where are your friends?" they ask.
 "...I don't know," she replies.

Time seemingly passes and life goes on for Mary, who sets out for a church in Utah where a job as an organist awaits her. In her travels, she is frightened by the sudden appearance of a pale-faced specter (identified by her as "the Man"). He vanishes and she continues on, but before long she sees the apparition once more, this time standing in the road before her moving car, and to avoid hitting him, she veers off the road. Regaining her composure, she finally arrives in Salt Lake City where, on the outskirts of town, she is mesmerized at the sight of a deserted beach pavilion.

Explicit violence without suspense is a contradiction of classical horror.

In town, Mary boards at a rooming house, welcomed by a hospitable landlady and a lewd, resident "Romeo" named John Linden (Sidney Berger). Her musical skills secure her the position as church organist, but Mary's personal life is literally haunted by further visitations from the Man. She also can't rationalize her own motive for being obsessively drawn to the pavilion. While shopping at a department store, Mary briefly lapses into an alternate existence where the town is oblivious to her presence—the people can neither hear nor see her. A doctor tries to offer some counsel, but Mary assertively insists upon solving her own problems. Instead, she alienates the landlady, and even the impassioned Linden, with her odd behavior. Mary is dis-

charged from the church when her organ music deviates from hymns and abruptly turns into a "profane," hellish rhapsody; in spite of her "blasphemy," the minister offers solace. Mary, however, turns her back on the clergyman.

Departing from town, Mary returns to the pavilion at twilight. She witnesses the Man, and other living corpses, performing a moribund dance. Upon closer observation she sees herself, with an ashen complexion, as the Man's dancing partner. Suddenly enlightened to the Man's identity, Mary screams and beats a hasty retreat, with the "souls" in close pursuit. She collapses on the beach; the band of grinning cadavers descends upon her.

Investigating Mary's disappearance, the police notice her abandoned car near the pavilion. They trace her footprints to a patch of disturbed sand, the site where the Man and his creepy compatriots converged on the frightened woman. The

trail of Mary's footprints abruptly comes to an end at the sundy imprint of her body.

Meanwhile, back at the site of the original accident, the car that tumbled from the bridge is located beneath the choppy water and hauled to shore. Within the vehicle are the bodies of the three accident victims, one of whom is Mary.

Carnival of Souls (1962), a black-and-white release, was produced on a paltry budget of \$30,000. Little more than pancake make-up was applied to simulate the appearance of living death. Herk Harvey's deft direction, however, transforms the commonplace into Hell. Demarcating a restraint of overstatement, Harvey's technology is reserved for reinterpreting routine images into icons of death and paranoia. Mary's fear is poignantly reflected in a scene where she barricades herself in a bedroom; photographed from a house exterior, her sil-

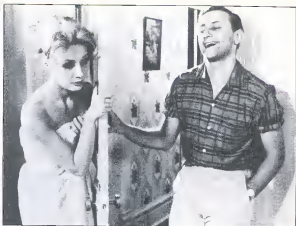
Mary Henry (Candace Hilligoss) is immediately hurried off for treatment.



houette, scurrying to seize furniture, is visible from a window. It's a *mise-en-scène* of anxiety that would not be matched until *Repulsion*, released three years later.

Reviews have criticized the film for post-production sound dubbing, which is obviously out-of-synch in certain scenes; paradoxically, *Carnival's* expressionistic style and visual flair often communicate the story without the use of dialogue. The minister, referring to Mary's musical aptitude, blissfully exclaims, "We have an organist capable of stirring the soul!" The minister's observation is visually translated, via a wordless sequence, into "the carnival of souls." Seated at the church organ, Mary digresses from her sheet music and mystically improvises a concerto that literally wakes the dead. The souls congregate within the ruins of the pavilion and dance to the haunting melody. Mary's music even resurrects the extinct pavilion; the whine of a cellope blends in harmony with the organ rendering. The sequence adds an ambiguous twist to the minister's comment, but would have worked independently of the expository dialogue.

The movie is entirely scored with organ music, correlative to Mary's chosen profession and *Carnival's* harmony with silent films. The organ strain, however, is not introduced until the car sinks beneath the surface of the river; presumably, the melody serves as a funeral dirge for Mary's apparent "death." The score assumes a presence which interacts with the Mary Henry character. A brass tune, issued from Mary's car radio during her nocturnal drive to Utah, supernaturally converts into a droning organ solo. The musical transition could be dismissed as a



Above: Sidney Berger plays John Linden, Mary's over-amorous neighbor.



Mary discovers that her soul is tormented by the dead.

In *Carnival*, there's no optimistic affirmation of eternity or a "second chance."

genre cliché; however, the organ music, reverberating from the radio, foreshadows the same "profane" ballad that Mary subsequently performs in the church (in fact, Mary may even be listening to her own predestined organ recital). Incongruous with the solemnity of the music is a scene where Mary, clad only in bath towel, changes into a robe; as the towel slides from her body, the organ music whips into a rousing grind-house theme!

Death is not only manifested in physical metaphors, but Mary's emotional impotence as well. We can certainly identify with her sense of survival ("survival," twice verbally associated with Mary, is the film's operative word: "I survive, if that's what you mean," she explains, succinctly describing her

empty existence); in fact, she appears to be the only passenger during the drag race who is visibly apprehensive as the car increases to a reckless speed. Mary, however, personifies uncompromising pragmatism, devoid of romantic commitment or spiritual convictions. "Mary, it takes more than intellect to be a musician," advises an organ manufacturer, "put your soul into it a little." The comment is ironic, since it's later disclosed that Mary literally exists as a lost soul in life and even in death. Mary's asexual behavior ("I have no desire for a boyfriend") and detached demeanor ("I have no desire for the close company of other people") may be attributed to her childhood. When a doctor tries to discover her past, Mary briskly opposes a suggestion to visit her parents in Benton,

claiming she's "driving straight through" her home town. The apparently strained relationship with her parents and repression of her past suggest that the origin of Mary's apathy is buried somewhere in Benton. In spite of her emotional divestment, Mary tries to elude death; as a "realist," she celebrates life but fears the unknown.

Carnival's primary horror is its secular interpretation of death, i.e., the unyielding logic that death is the ultimate finality; there's no optimistic affirmation of an eternity or "second chance." Mary's involuntary adherence to this premise serves as the nucleus of the movie. The assemblage of souls at the pavilion precludes any hint of the hereafter; they are pallid corpses, not phantoms, appendages of the Man and a grim reminder of

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Bob Clark

He went on to helm films as diverse as *Porky's* and *A Christmas Story*, but Bob Clark cut his directorial teeth on slashers, zombies and Sherlock Holmes



Deranged



Murder by Decree

By Ian Johnston

If he had his way, Bob Clark's first film would have been his nostalgic comedy *A Christmas Story* (1983), his talky melodrama *Tribute* (1980) or even his obnoxious teen comedy *Porky's* (1981). Instead, necessity forced the director into making horror films.

"The whole reason I got started in horror films was that it was either that or porno, or some sort of cowboy thing," said Louisiana-born Clark. But while he approached the genre reluctantly, the four low-budget horror films that Clark produced and directed in the early 70s proved to be offbeat, sometimes frightening and always entertaining.

Clark's *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* (1972) is a no-budget zombie movie that combines Clark's penchant for broad humor with some ghoulish effects by the film's star and Clark's collaborator, Alan Ormsby. *Deathdream* (1972), another Clark/Ormsby collaboration, is a reworking of "The Monkey's Paw" with a modern twist. In the film, a Vietnam soldier returns home to his family and friends in spite of being quite dead.

Clark then produced Ormsby's *Deranged* (1974), which lent a humorous bend to the Ed Gein story. The murderer/cannibal who stuffs his mother is not just sympathetic, he's actually likeable. *Black Christmas* (1974) is arguably the best of the four. The disturbing story, about a sorority house

terrorized by a killer phoning from within the house, contains many of the elements of slasher films produced years later.

Clark feels that every film he's made has been a step up in sophistication and a conscious effort to do something different. But since 1974 "something different" hasn't included horror. Considering Clark's recent efforts—the Dolly/Stallone vehicle *Rhinestone* (1984), *Turk 182* (1985)—it may be time for the man to consider getting back to his roots.

But it won't happen just yet. The 48-year-old Clark, now lodged solidly in the A-movie category, recently completed shooting *Loose Cannons*, a big-budget "action/thriller/melodrama/comedy" starring Gene Hackman and Dan Aykroyd, scheduled for fall release.



Black Christmas

HF: I understand *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things* wasn't really your first film.

BC: I made two films before that one back-to-back. One was a comedy take-off on the "Emperor's New Clothes" with John Carradine. We finished it but it never came to life. But my first film was... oh, what was it called?

HF: *She Man* (1967)?

BC: Yeah, *She Man*. It was sort of a spy thriller. It was an absurd film. I had no idea what I was doing. The people involved with it were all amateurs. It was done in a place called Lee High Acres in Florida, at a sort of plant hydroponics farm and funeral parlor. It was so bizarre, and totally incoherent. I'd like to write a book about it someday.

HF: Were either of those films released?

BC: I don't think either of them ever saw the light of day. I've never seen them. I hope no one ever sees them. I'm not sure anybody has. It was at that point that I realized I was hooked on films. But I knew nothing about them. So I spent the next few years as a production manager. I did everything and learned a lot.

HF: When did you meet Alan Ormsby?

BC: At the University of Miami. We were at the Rink Theater together. Both of us had an interest in writing and film, and the same sort of bizarre sense of humor. He eventually became the star of *Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things*. He also did all the make-up effects.

HF: How did that film come about?

BC: It was done with private money,

about \$50,000, near Coral Gables, Florida. Again, it was done entirely with amateur actors. All those people crawling out of the ground at the end were college professors, wives and city councilmen.

HF: The combination of slapstick humor and graphic violence was an odd mix.

BC: I felt it was original. But, let's face it, it took a lot of inspiration from *Night Of The Living Dead*. I saw it for the first time a couple of years ago. Now I think some of the humor is a little heavy-handed, but the whole film holds up really well.

HF: Did the low budget present any problems?

BC: We'd shoot all night and I'd spend the day guarding the set from kids who'd get in and vandalize it. The film was shot over 11 nights. It would run all day until 6 pm, when we'd start shooting. And it would start running again at 6 am, when we'd stop. The film was touched by fate.

HF: With the bad luck you'd had on the first two films, did you think this film would make any money?

BC: We were very naive. We figured we would make a lot of money—we didn't, of course. But somebody got rich on it. It's done quite well on cable and it's had a good video life.

HF: How did that film lead to *Deathdream*?

BC: Some people in Canada saw *Children* and really liked it, and liked what we got for the money. So they wanted Alan and I to make a film for them. Alan wrote it and I directed. The original title was *The Veteran*. But the investors thought that was a little controversial.

"Deranged was too good. It was so real and so horrible as it was played."

HF: Were you trying to make a strong statement about Vietnam?

BC: Oh, yeah. The shell-shocked soldier. The soldier shooting up. The denial that goes on in the soldier's family. It was all there on purpose. But we wanted to be very subtle about it. No one ever refers to war in the film, or denounces it. We wanted people to see it and have no idea what we were getting at. Of course, then it opened in France and they picked up on it right away. They often overreact to such subtleties, but they quite correctly

picked up on all that. It was a huge hit there.

HF: Where were the opening Vietnam sequences shot?

BC: The whole film was shot in three weeks in Brooksville, Florida, for about \$250,000.

HF: *Deathdream* again used comedy with violent horror. That's in all your early work.

BC: It's in all my work, period. I always combine comedy with action and horror. I think it reflects life as it is. That's something Alan and I share.

HF: There's a lot of confusion around your next project, *Deranged*. You've been listed in the credits as producer, producer and director and not listed at all.

BC: Alan directed it and I produced it. But I decided to take my name off it. It was too good. It was so real and so horrible as it was played.

HF: But you liked it?

BC: I thought the look of the film was remarkably good. We were going for a *Police Gazette* look and I think we achieved it.

HF: What exactly prompted you to take your name off it?

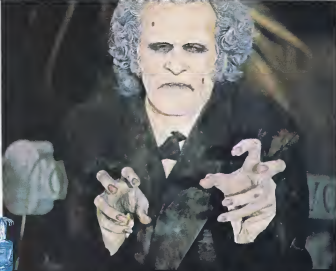
BC: It was based on Ed Gein, the man

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PHANTOM of the OPERA

Robert Englund is a different kind of villain in a reinterpretation of the classic Gaston Leroux tale.

Time has been good to *The Phantom of the Opera*. Modern audiences seem to enjoy his backstage antics as much as they did when the first *Phantom* hit the screen in 1925. With *Phantom* raging on the Broadway boards, and big screen entries like *The Phantom of the Mall* updating the Phantom mythology, the character of the Phantom is becoming a cultural icon to rival the world's great villains: Dracula, Frankenstein and Freddy Krueger.

Speaking of Freddy Krueger... is that Robert Englund as the Phantom? No, your eyes aren't playing tricks on you, Englund has taken on the classic character of Eric Destler, that misbegotten musical misanthrope far better known as The Phantom. The notorious Phantom, of course, holds opera tickets not in the box seats or mezzanine, but in the bowels of his favorite European opera house.

Englund, whose acting background actually began on the classical stage, is right at home with this timeless tale, which in previous incarnations starred such greats as Lon Chaney, Claude Rains and Herbert Ross. Director Dwight Little apprised us that Englund's performance can stand up to those of his predecessors: "He's brilliant.

The psychological elements of the newest Phantom are striking, molding the story and subtext.

Whatever people think they know of him from Freddy they just don't know what he's capable of. *The Phantom*'s just never been done the way Robert's done it in this movie. If for nothing else, people have got to come and see Robert."

Englund's interpretation of the role was derived from historical research and modern psychological theory. "In creating my Phantom," Englund explained, "I used the characters of Jack the Ripper and the Hunchback of Notre Dame, plus Jungian symbols and mythology."

The psychological elements of this most recent Phantom are striking, molding the story and its subtext. The story is told via dreams, voices and even time travel, projecting what director Dwight Little calls "the very deep mythological images we all carry within us."

Little's version begins in the present, as Christine Day, a young opera singer (played by Jill Schoelen), prepares for an upcoming opera audition. "As she researches for the audition," Little explains, "Christine finds an old opera manuscript deep within the catacombs of a library. When she opens it and sings the music, she brings on a curse. The next day at the audition she is transported back to the time of the Phantom."



Robert Englund as the Phantom works to assure Christine's (Jill Schoelen, right) success.



The major part of the movie takes place in London, the year 1888. "75 minutes of the 90-minute film take place in the Victorian era," Little commented. "Except for the fact of the 'bookend idea' of a present opening and present ending, we stuck pretty close to the story of the original Gaston Leroux novel."

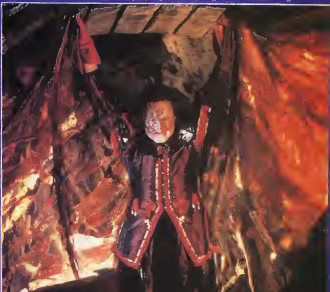
Paying heed to the Phantom's operatic advice, the transported character of Christine lands the coveted role as understudy in the opera. Possessed with his beautiful protégé, the Phantom works to assure her success. Anything or anyone who might get in Christine's way becomes quick work of the Phantom, as he kills his victims and uses their skin to supplement his own mutated facial tissue.

When the lead opera singer's voice is strangely stricken, Christine gets her opportunity to assume the lead role. After a spectacular opening night performance, guided by "a voice in the dark," Christine's triumph



is marred only by a dissenting critic. The next day, after the critic's review hits the newsstands, the critic is found dead. (Do we detect a hidden message here?)

As suspicion of the murder runs to the Phantom, the Phantom pleads with Christine to protect him, and give him her love. Feeling



He wages war in the corridors beneath the opera.



In his dying moments the Phantom pulls Christine into the fire.



Director Dwight Little makes sure there isn't a shortage of victims.



pity and empathy for this tormented man, Christine accedes to his wishes. But when the police close in, the Phantom seizes Christine as hostage and leads her to the labyrinthine corridors beneath the opera house. There, a cat-and-mouse chase ensues as the Phantom holds his pursuers at bay. In a scene as grand as any *Phantom* past, the chamber is set ablaze, engulfing the Phantom who, in his dying moments, pulls Christine into the flames. They perish together... or so it seems. The twist ending finds them both returned to New York City, in the present day, to continue their unusual romance.

The cast of characters behind the making of the film is a story in themselves. Menahem Golan, the new chief of 21st Century films, has just recently split with his long-time partner and self-styled "go-go" boy at Cannon, Yoram Globus. *Phantom* is one of 21st Century's first releases. Golan's hopes are high: "I believe we've come up with an entirely new movie which will become the classic film version of *The Phantom of the Opera*."


Possessed with his beautiful protege, the Phantom works to assure her success.

Producer Harry Alan Towers is one of the most prolific behind-the-scenes forces of the international cinema. Involved in the entertainment industry since the conclusion of World War II, Towers produced the *Fu Manchu* films in the 60s, and has produced literally hundreds of other productions, most recently Cannon's *Platoon Leader*, *Gor*, and 21st Century's upcoming *Buried Alive* and *The House of Usher*. He has worked with directors as diverse as Spanish low-budget specialist Jesus "Jess" Franco, John Hough (*Legend of Hell House*), Ken Russell and softcore master Chuck Vincent. A typical Towers cast might include Donald Pleasence, Robert Vaughn, Oliver Reed or John Carradine teamed with former X-rated film stars such as Samantha Fox or Ginger Lynn Allen.

Towers relates how *The Phantom of the Opera*'s unusual structure came to be: "We didn't want to get bogged down with a period thriller. So we decided to begin the film in contemporary New York, where Christine uses a piece of music for an audition and suddenly finds herself taken back to the era in which Gaston Leroux's original story is set."

Towers was delighted with the combination of star Englund and director Little. "The fact that we could get both Robert and Dwight Little, who directed the extremely successful film *Halloween 4*, gave us what I feel is a winning combination."

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A man with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket with a patterned sleeve, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The background is a blurred, warm-toned outdoor setting.

Alien enforcer Azeeq (Jay Bilal) arrives
looking for Talec.

DARK ANGEL

With alien intergalactic dope dealers, outrageous weaponry and Dolph Lundgren—the cop/sci fi thriller lives on



Caine teams up with FBI man Lawrence Smith (Brian Benben, center left)

By Maitland McDonagh

What do you get when you scramble together parts of *The Hidden* and *Alien Nation*, season with a dash of *Brain Damage* and *Without Warning*, shake well, add Dolph Lundgren and flambe the whole thing? You get *Dark Angel*, a new science-fiction/action-adventure picture shot on location in Houston, Texas, and dedicated to proving there's no place in the galaxy where they just say no to drugs.

It's bad enough the war on narcotics has to be fought across international borders. What with drugs coming over the Rio Grande and through the Gulf of Mexico, Houston detective Jack Caine (Lundgren) has seen plenty of that. But *intergalactic*

dope peddlers—now we're talking above and beyond the call of duty. Still, that's the premise of *Dark Angel* and he's the protagonist, so he's just got to deal with it.

Dark Angel opens with a bang—literally. "There's this guy in a Mercedes driving down the highway," explains special effects supervisor Bruno Van Zeebroeck, a 17-year industry veteran specializing in pyrotechnics. "He hears this whining sound, looks around, and suddenly there's a ten-foot crater in the street in front of him. He comes to a halt and this alien guy grabs him and takes off with his car." Now that's something we can kind of relate to—drug dealers waylaying us and stealing our cars. Things start to sound unlikely when

the cop who draws the case is Lundgren (*Rocky IV*, *Red Scorpion*, *Masters of the Universe* and *The Punisher*).

Lundgren's physique may be his fortune, but he says he's looking to branch out, to play a character with an IQ larger than the circumference of his biceps. He picks up the story in his barely accented English. "Jack Caine is out on a dope case and everything goes wrong—his partner is killed, he loses the heroin, loses the money... it's a bad situation. So the FBI gives him a partner, an agent named Smith. He's the little-guy-in-a-suit type who writes everything down in a book and plays by the rules. Caine's got a girlfriend, but the case is putting a strain on their relationship, be-

cause every time he promises to do something with her or take her somewhere his job interferes.

"Together, Cuine and Smith figure there's some kind of drug war going on and they set out to track down the criminals. What they find is an alien who's stolen the heroin so he can shoot-up his victims, stimulating the production of endorphins in their bodies. Then he drills a hole in their heads and sucks out the endorphins, which he collects to take back to where he came from. Unfortunately for him, there's a space cop hunting him who gets killed and hands the mission over to me." And from that point on, it's alien/drug-dealing-seum beware.

"The key to a project like this is to make it believable," says director Craig Buzley wryly. "You need to be clear with your cause and effect relationships, otherwise people figure it's all a crapshoot and can't be bothered to care what's going to happen next, to get involved with the characters. You have to keep enough connection to reality so that the viewer can imagine that, if he were in his car or at the market and it happened to him, this is the way he'd react."

Budley made his feature debut with last year's *Action Jackson*, orchestrating a slim-bang compendium of clichés around the massive person of Carl Weathers and proving in the process that *Blaxploitation* is not dead (as well did Keenan Ivory Wayans and *I'm Gonna Get You Sucker*).



A local girl becomes Talee's victim.



Talee barely escapes a car blast.

This year's mission: to breathe life into the impossible story of a drug dealer from space and the alien lawman who's pursued him across the galaxy, a renegade vice cop who's lost his partner and gained a prize, by-the-book FBI sidekick, and the hot time that ensues in the Lone Star State when they all mix it up at high speed. And all this in a 48-day (actually night, mostly) shoot in which *Baxley* and his crew managed to average an incredible 25 set-ups per night, even with complicated stunts and pyrotechnics. "Safety and being responsible to the schedule were our major concerns," he says. "Without the crew I had, this shoot would never have been possible." *Baxley*'s years of experience with stunts and action sequences helped keep the machine running, but he cites such directors as Alan Pakula, Richard Mulligan and Norman Jewison as major influences on his approach to filmmaking and he emphasizes emotional impact, rather than physical spectacle.

"Say you were out walking your dog and a seven-foot creature accosted you, threw you to the ground, tore your shirt open and then you saw this smoking device come out through the air like a worm and go right into your chest. Well, you'd be terrified, wouldn't you?" asks *Baxley* rhetorically. Yes, that sounds like a fair assumption. "I want to tap into that 'I'd be terrified' response," he continues, "because that will make it real for the viewer."

Azeck and Talec (the good and the bad aliens, respectively; they're both the ugly, whist with white eyes and Twisted Sister hair and weird viscous blood—"creams of snaf," says special effects man Tony Gardner, whose work was recently seen in Chuck Russell's *The Blob*) come to Planet Earth armed to the teeth, and everyone on the production is sure their lethal fribs will be an audience pleaser. "It's about the size of a compact disk," says Van Zeebroeck. "It's ejected from a gruntnet the alien wears on his hand and goes right for the throat. It can slice through steel beams and everything."

"The idea of doing something different with the weaponry intrigued me," continues *Baxley*, "but we were working from the knowledge that everything has been done. All you can do is put a new twist on things. So we looked for a different photographic treatment; what we wound up with was a point-of-view that puts you right on board as it flies."

Like *Phantasm*'s flying spheres, the disks were a technical challenge. "There was a scene where it slices through a wall," explains Van Zeebroeck, "and Craig was looking for an effect like what you get when you take a power saw and draw it across the wall—sparking, fire, chunks of stuff being torn out. We tried about eight different ways of doing it—sparklers, igniters, primer cord; you name it, we tried it—before coming up with the solution.

We used these teeny, tiny bullet hits called D-80 quarter loads. We stacked them side by side—it took 54 hits—cut them into this wall, set up the disk and the result was great."

"When the aliens die, the bodies internally combust like flash paper," said FX-man Gardner.

Although the basic alien make-ups were straightforward—little more than contact lenses and hair extensions—their death throes kept Gardner busy. "When the aliens die, their whole bodies kind of internally combust like flash paper," he says. "Azeck dies in the back seat of Caine's car, and we did some appliances on the actor (Jay Elias), making his face look as though it was splitting open. We lined the cracks with tiny, rice-sized bulbs, about 15 per crack, so it looked as though light was escaping. We also made a mouth plate with a bunch of larger bulbs emitting red light. As Jay's lips part, it looks as though something is building up inside."

"He reaches up, as though he wants to tell Caine something or give him something, and we built a false arm rigged on a rheostat so we could control the intensity of light, gradually increasing it. All of this happens within seconds, then you cut to outside the car and see this huge, red fireball engulf it. When we cut back to the interior, all you see are the police officers scrambling to get out of the front seat of the car and some smoldering clothes in the

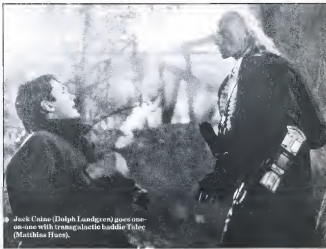
back." Talec's demise is even nastier. "He gets blasted repeatedly by a shotgun in an old factory building. The blast knocks him backwards and he's impaled on a pipe; the director compared the effect he wanted to a spider pinned to a card, writhing and unable to get away. Once he's impaled he drops his own weapon, Caine picks it up, shoots him, and he explodes."

"The first rig we used was designed so we could show Talec being propelled backwards and up into the air. It was kind of like a tester-totter on wheels. In effect, we had Matthias Hues on a large, mobile slantboard with a false body extending from waist to neck. Inside that false chest there was a ram with a length of pipe about three feet long on it. The whole platform was moved backwards as the shotgun hits went off, and on the last hit the ram released so you get the sense he had been slammed into the pipe with tremendous force. It was also rigged with tubes that oozed alien blood. Once Talec was impaled, Matthias was slung in a harness."

"For the explosion we did a full-body cast; the head and hands were detailed, but the body was cast in non-fire-resistant, rigid foam dyed a kind of pinkish-white. The clothing covered it and it was wrapped in detonation cord. The idea was for the body to explode into a cloud of pinkish-whitish dust, but what's nice is that because it isn't flame resistant it actually turns into a fireball. When audiences see that, they'll know Talec is really dead—he's not coming back."

Van Zeebroeck's expertise was in non-stop demand. "This was a very heavy pyrotechnics show," he comments. "We're doing some of the most complicated stuff I've

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Jack Caine (Dolph Lundgren) goes one-on-one with transgalactic baddie Talec (Matthias Hues).

Dario Argento

With his unique blend of bizarre, sophisticated story-telling, enhanced by stunning visuals and gallons of gore, the Italian filmmaker has gathered legions of followers



—By Maitland McDonagh—

Dario Argento eludes easy definition. John Carpenter and Brian De Palma are first and foremost top-notch technicians whose movies click along like well-oiled machinery, and Larry Cohen can be counted on to build every picture around a concept so offbeat that you feel your lip curling into an involuntary smile as you think, "Right...an Aztec serpent-god nesting in the Chrysler building." George Romero knows his way

***Suspiria* and *Inferno* are demented, live-action cartoons, lit in jewel tones.**

around zombie gut-crunchers, and David Cronenberg has the inside track on portraying grotesque psychosexual conflicts.

With Argento you're never quite sure what you're going to get. He's as likely to make a reasonably straightforward, densely plotted thriller (in Italian, a *giallo*—yellow—from the yellow covers many thrillers sport) as a supernatural horror movie. Just when you think you can break his work into two distinct categories, he'll make a film



that combines the elements of both. His influences range from Alfred Hitchcock and Mario Bava to Thomas de Quincey, his interests from opera to paranormal phenomena and entomology, and he mixes them indiscriminately. You don't see what telepathy in the animal kingdom and serial murder have to do with one another? Well,

that's what makes Dario Argento a unique contributor to the horror genre. He'll contrive plots that twist and turn like Gordian knots and then he'll resolve them with some offhand nod to weird science or wacky psychobabble—it could drive a classical mystery fan to murder. He'll lay on the blood like some Grand Guignol junkie, then retreat to higher aesthetic ground, alienating horror purists with one and gore groupies with the other. He assembles casts so weird that you can only wonder: Michael Brandon and Minsy Farmer rub elbows with spaghetti Western regular Carlo Pedersoli, David Hemmings shares the screen with Clara Calamai (star of Visconti's *B42 Ossessione*), Jessica Harper, Susy Kendall, Tony Francioso, Karl Malden, John Saxon, Alida Valli, James Franciscus and Joan Bennett also pop up in Argento's works. The director will orchestrate a technical *tour de force* of breathtaking complexity, then ignore the performances—a touch-and-go area at the best of times, since Argento tows the line of Italian industry practice with regard to international casts and across-the-board dubbing.

You also get the feeling Argento's perversely hell-bent on not fulfilling audience expectations. If they loved *Suspiria*—a phantasmagoric, candy-colored horror-show full of witches and bats and malevolent spirits, dedicated to the notion that magic is all around us—then let's see what they make of the ice-cold *Tenebre*, a murder mystery in which everyone seems guilty. Maybe Argento just doesn't worry about it at all—a petty consistency is the proverbial bogoblin of little minds.

None of this has stopped Argento from becoming a superstar in Europe—the French couldn't love him more if he were Hitchcock, Lang and Spielberg all rolled into one. There he's the subject of critical essays and scholarly retrospectives while picking them in at the box office, an unbeatable combination he has yet to duplicate in the United States. Yes, *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, *Deep Red* and *Suspiria* were hits, but *Cat O' Nine Tails*, *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* and *Phenomena* (renamed *Creepers* for US release) didn't exactly set the world on fire. *Inferno*,



Tenebrae and the recent *Opera* never even made it into real commercial distribution at all. It probably hasn't helped Argento's case with mainstream critics that his films have all been extensively, and at times carelessly, edited for American release. *Deep Red* lost close to 20 minutes of its original 115-minute running time in the transatlantic trip, and it wasn't an isolated case.

Just what is it that makes the director notable? To get into Argento-land you have to give up certain narrative expectations—no one ever rationalized why things happen in *Four Flies on Grey Velvet*—but the payoff is a magic-carpet ride of perversion and paranoia that can't be equaled. Telephones don't ring; they shriek. Doors don't close; they snap shut like the jaws of Hell. Once you step into this universe, throw out the rule book: flashbacks and hallucinations, dreams and reality, science and magic, religion and fetishism, love and mania all become one. Few moviemakers even have a complete world view, and fewer still can articulate one so thoroughly and with such conviction as Argento.

Then there's this sense of visual flamboyance: the saturated colors, the freakish



Argento began his career in film as a critic for the newspaper *Fase Sera* and quickly made the move to screenwriting. His first credit was the story for Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (with Leone himself and Bernardo Bertolucci), and in two years his name appeared on more than six other films, including *Today It's Me*, *Tomorrow It's You*, *Commandos*, *Battle of the Commandos*, *Five Man Army*, *Sexual Revolution* and *One Night at Dinner*. In 1970, still not yet 30 years old, Argento began directing with his own screenplay, entitled *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*.

Argento subscribes to the gore theory—at least in part.

It was an auspicious beginning, generally well-received by critics and audiences alike. The story of an American writer in Rome caught up in a series of murders, derived in large from Frederic Brown's *The Screaming Mimi* (uncredited, because Argento didn't have the rights to the novel) was less than earth-shattering, but style was the



shifts in angle and perspective, the way the camera tracks and pans and dollies around with no regard for the rules of unobtrusive placement or point-of-view. *Tenebrae*'s two-and-a-half-minute track over the exterior of an apartment building is a techno-lunatic's fantastic dream of a throw-up ride. Even the physical world is fluid: In *Inferno*, a young woman drops her keys into a puddle and reaches down to pick them up, only to sink her arm into water up to her elbow. In *Polltergeist III*, it's a cheap trick, but in *Inferno*, it's an unnerving exercise in rubber reality. The bottom line is that Argento has something for everyone. There's murder and mayhem galore, buckets of blood, outrageous set design and enough subtext to keep a small army of critics at their typewriters for months.



Creepers (released in the U.S. as *Phenomena*).

main attraction. Long after the specifics of the convoluted plot have been forgotten, the picture of the character trapped like a fly in amber between a double set of plate-glass doors—isolated from the street on one side, and from the art gallery where an attempted murder is taking place on the other—sticks in the mind, a frozen image. In *Bird*, Argento laid out the terms that were to govern his next three pictures: *Cat O'Nine Tails*, *Four Flies on Grey Velvet* and *Deep Red*. The stories would all revolve around serial killers, the victims predominantly pretty young women and the murders staged as self-contained vignettes. The protagonists would stumble accidentally into a world where murder and madness reign supreme, a world they had no idea even existed, and find themselves unable to escape. Beroque



gone seductively mad, cast in alluring visual terms. Who would want to be sane?

Argento followed *Deep Red* with *Suspense* and *Inferno*, the first two installments of what was (and perhaps still is) to be a trilogy inspired by Thomas DeQuincy's essay, "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow." A visionary writer in love with opium dreams, DeQuincy (best known as the author of *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*) provided Argento with inspiration in the form of the image of the Mothers of Sorrow, who visit their miseries on helpless mankind. They are Mater Lachrymarum (Mother of Tears), Mater Suspensorum (Sighs) and Mater Tenebrarum (Darkness). Each wicked mother, extrapolated Argento, holds sway over a terrible house where her power is concentrated: Mater Suspensorum in Fribourg, Germany; Mater Tenebrarum in New York; and Mater Lachrymarum in Rome. This arch, fairy-tale foundation dictated to Argento a rather different look from the *giallo* *Suspense* (which takes place, naturally enough, in the house of Mater Suspensorum) and *Inferno* (set in the house of Mater Tenebrarum) are demented, live-action cartoons, lit in jewel tones and full of demons and wicked witches.

visuals would come to dominate the action. *Bird* dabbled in off-kilter camera angles and framing that suggested the existence of a mad world running parallel to the conventional one. *Deep Red* was overwhelmed by a series of bizarre, close-up sequences—delicious pan shots of a jumble of marbles, dolls and other innocuous objects—that swept the same world away.

From *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* to *Deep Red*, the key word is escalation. The murders get grosser and more outlandish, the colors get brighter, the camera shakes loose, the soundtracks get louder and more intrusive, and the world view gets bleaker. At the end of *Bird*, Sam Dalmas caught a killer, beaten his writer's block and is ready to go home to America: a revitalized man. By the finale of *Deep Red*, pianist Marc Daly has seen his best friend killed, has been attacked with a hatchet and is left staring at his own reflection in a pool of blood. In between came the gloriously mean-spirited *Cat O'Nine Tails* and *Rear Window on Grey Velvet*, whose warped title isn't the weirdest part by half. *Cat's* catalogue of plot elements runs the gamut from blackmail, incest and grave robbing to child abuse, torture and, of course, murder. Who can help but love a movie in which the killer is driven by the XYY chromosome problem (remember the XYY chromosome theory?), and the amateur detectives are a blind man

who thinks up crossword puzzles, a smug reporter and a little girl? *Flies* is just one long nightmare, the story of rock-and-roll drummer Roberto Tobias, who thinks he's committed a murder and learns the world is so far from the pretty orderly place he imagined that it almost kills him.

Argento made a brief detour out of the cinefantastique with *The Five Days of Milan*, a historical black comedy, then returned to the *giallo* with *Deep Red*, starring David Hemmings. Even extensively cut, *Deep Red* is something else: a starved hamster to

Give up certain expectations, and the payoff is a magic-carpet ride of perversion and paranoia.

Michaelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* in which there is most certainly a murder, and mother and mother and mother. *Deep Red* is formally rigorous, full of the flourishes that characterize a filmmaker who really loves his medium, and utterly ferocious—no one here gets out alive. There is a mystery, yes, and there are clues. An English pianist living in Rome (Hemmings) sees the brutal murder of his next-door neighbor, a noted psychic. Too late to help her, he sees something in her apartment, something he's sure could help catch the killer. The police aren't convinced, but the killer is, and the two embark on a warped game of cat-and-mouse that leads to a long-forgotten murder and the familiar maelstrom of madness and unnatural desire. What makes *Deep Red* resonate are the details: a mechanical doll, chattering and thrashing on the floor, heralds the killer's arrival; a murder victim's dying words are traced in the condensation on a bathroom mirror, and are lost when a window flies open and lets the cold air in; an angelic little girl impales a lizard on a hatpin and laughs. *Deep Red* is a portrait of a world



Suspense, the story of an American ballet student who finds the curriculum at the Fribourg Academy is less about *piles* and *arabesques* than witchcraft and demonology, may be Argento's best-known picture, and many fans count it as their favorite.

Inferno fared less well, never making it into general release in America. A pity, because the Manhattan apartment building in which Mater Tenebrarum holds sway is a riot of secret passages and dirty little secrets, like the vast underwater ballroom entered through an apparent puddle on the basement floor. Though neither picture gets many points on their stories, they're both driven by a poetic logic: Argento's New York in particular is a gloriously haunted city, and *Inferno's* imagery is sometimes worthy of Jean Cocteau. Though Mater Lachrymarum makes a brief appearance in *Inferno* and Argento

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The forced spectator, from *Opera*.

DAVID ARGENTO
TENEBRAS
THE DARK COUNTRY



Demons 2, directed by protégé
Lamberto Bava.



A gateway to another world reveals
itself in *Inferno*.



Inferno



One of *Tenebras*' bloody killings.

COMMUNION

One man's close encounters with aliens forms the basis of a bestseller that's now a big-budget film



Strieber (Christopher Walken) is kidnapped by extraterrestrials (top) and brought into their strange craft.



By Lowell Goldman

I feel like I'm being sucked dry from within—a spider of the mind. Like I'm being eaten alive and I can't see it or hear it or feel it!

—Communion author Whitley Strieber

The renowned international best-seller about Whitley Strieber's abduction by aliens has now become a seven-million-dollar feature film. Strieber, who authored the book, wrote the screenplay and Hollywood-based Australian filmmaker

Philippe Mora (*Howling II* and *III*, *Death of a Soldier*) is producer/director.

Communion was shot in just under eight weeks in Los Angeles last summer. The crew also spent about a week in New York, where one of the locations included the famed Whitney Museum.

Mora's relationship with Strieber dates back to the late 60s, when both were living in the London. Mora was pursuing his interest in painting while Strieber was studying in the London School of Film. Twenty years later, they formed their own production company called Phressantry Films. Their main objective was to bring *Communion* to the screen.

"I actually met up with Whitley before he wrote the book. I think it was in early '86," recalled Mora. "He told me that he was having these bizarre experiences. He didn't know if he was going crazy or if it was for real."

Mora kept in touch with the author while the book was being written. "Obviously, this was sensationalistic subject matter. But I think what really gave it credibility was that Whitley himself was always very skeptical. In fact, the book is skeptical and so is the film. That's why I think the book was such a big success. After all, I think it's the biggest selling book on the subject of aliens and UFOs."

Whitley Strieber relives his encounter under hypnosis.



In the film, Whitley (Christopher Walken) is a successful novelist facing an identity crisis. He decides to spend a tranquil weekend with his wife Anne (Lindsay Crouse) and their seven-year-old son Andrew (newcomer Joel Carlson) at their country cabin in upstate New York. While Whitley has no clear memory of what happened one October night during his stay, something has obviously driven him into a state of depression. When the family returns to the cabin for Christmas, Whitley has flashes during the night of surgical instruments and small aliens with huge, dark eyes. He recalls a needle being inserted into his head, and his wife discovers a needle mark behind his ear. His paranoia reaches the breaking point when he almost shoots his wife. At this point, Whitley is firmly convinced that he's in the midst of a nervous breakdown.

His doctor refers him to a psychiatrist, Dr. Janet Duffy (Frances Sternhagen). Dr. Duffy puts Whitley under hypnosis in order to find out what's really happened to him; while under, Whitley relives his alien abduction in vivid detail. Afterwards, Dr. Duffy coaxes him to join an encounter group of people who've had similar experiences. In a final effort to overcome his anxiety, Whitley goes off alone to his secluded cabin to face himself—or the aliens.

The film chronicles events in the book as closely as possible. It even ends with the author writing *Communion*.

He recalls a needle being inserted in his head, and his wife discovers a needle mark behind his ear.

"When you compress a book into a 100-minute movie, you inevitably lose something," said Mora. "But we really believe we captured the essence of the book. I know Whitley is pleased with the film. He was also very involved in the making of it."

During his stay at Strieber's cabin in upstate New York, Mora revealed that he also

had an eerie experience. "While we were working on the script, I had very vivid nightmares of aliens surrounding the cabin. The reason I now believe it was a dream is that I was so psyched-up to be working on the film. I guess it was kind of a natural thing to happen." Mora faltered for a few seconds and said softly, "On the other hand, who knows?"

Walken was the director's first choice to personify Strieber on celluloid. "The film needed an actor who could convincingly portray someone who was doubting his own sanity and at the same time retain the sympathy of the audience. It was quite a challenge. But I honestly think Christopher did a superb job."

"The actor also got into his character by keeping an eye on the author," Mora continued. "He captured many aspects of Whitley's personality. Sometimes Whitley was kind of stunned to see his own emotions portrayed so accurately on screen."

Crouse was another inspired piece of a casting. "She's married to playwright David Mamet and she has an insight as to what it's like to be married to a famous writer. That gave an added dimension to her role."

Rounding out the production team are FX vet Michael McCracken (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Silver Bullet*), Production Designer Linda Pearl (*Out Cold*) and Director of Photography Louis Loring (*Hawking III*, *Death of a Soldier*). Continued on page 90



With his wife Anne (Lindsay Crouse).

BRINKE STEVENS NIGHT ANGEL

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"We are the traditional damsels in distress, awaiting rescue by a dashing hero."

For my latest release, *Grandmother's House*, I spent over a month on-location in Redlands, California. It was an intriguing psychodrama directed by Peter Rader. I finally got to kill some body—very satisfying, after being the victim for so many films. Believe me, I got out a lot of hostility and tension!

One of the great frustrations of being an actress is when a movie you've done doesn't get the attention it deserves. *Grandmother's House* will probably go straight to video, even though it deserves better. My other frustration is that low-budget scripts are often conceived, written and filmed very quickly.

Currently, I'm working with Fred Olen Ray to develop a new project, *Teenage Exorcist*. Besides starring in the movie, I'm also co-writing the script with Ted Newsom.

I'm set to do another picture for Roger Corman, with Jim Wynorski (*Return of the Swamp Thing*) at the helm. The project is called *Transylvanica Twist*, a horror/comedy in which I play Betty Lou, Van Helsing's college sweetheart. I'll also be appearing in the sequel to the H.P. Lovecraft film *The Unnamable*, entitled *The Statement Of Randolph Carter*. A long-time Lovecraft fan, I'm a sucker for classics!

It doesn't seem like that long a time, from the little girl reading *Weird Tales* under her covers to the actress being chased across the screen by a monster. Fantasies and dreams can indeed become real. □

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model, so she can pull off a lot of different looks, and she's a really good actress. Her accent is nondescript. Dominique and I, if we could have run with it, probably would have gone more for a middle Eastern accent, to be true to the myth, but Walter was really concerned. He wanted her to sound as if she could have come from anywhere—which also makes sense, on one level."

After final script revisions, in order to bring the project to a level manageable on its budget, the film shot four six-day weeks last year on various locations scattered around Los Angeles. "I have experience making small-budget films in Europe," said Girard. "I have a reputation of giving a very polished look with very little money. I of course wanted to obtain this in order to transcend the formula of an exploitative movie. I believe we achieved an incredible quality. The producers are very glad about it, because they know this film will establish them as a company with credibility."



The rushed production schedule prevented Steve Johnson's crew from being able to film many of the planned special effects during principal photography. Fortunately, the budget included additional money for shooting pick-ups, so after the principle footage was assembled, the crew shot an additional eight days of effects footage late last year. By that time, Johnson had left to work on James Cameron's *The Abyss*, so the additional effects were assigned to KNB.

Girard found working with both teams to be an educational and rewarding experience. "I had some special effects in my previous movies but never to the extent of *Night Angel*," he said. "I enjoyed learning about special effects and learning how to shoot special effects in order to sell them. Special effects people know what they

need to get, but they don't necessarily know how to sell the effect to the audience. That's my part of the work. I've got to push them not only to do the effect correctly, but to give me the freedom to shoot the effect with a specific camera angle and movement. Instead of having a prosthetic person totally steady—that wouldn't sell the effect—I need that person to move, and that sometimes makes for incredible complications."

After completing the effects photography, Girard left the production temporarily, going to Salt Lake City to film *Halloween V*. Paragon Arts, meanwhile, put the project on hiatus for a couple of months in order to raise money to complete post-production work. In mid-June, Girard and Steve Johnson returned to the production to film an opening prologue sequence; Girard is also supervising the soundtrack's music and effects.

"If a horror film is successful, it is very much because of the soundtrack," Girard claimed. "I love films because they are fluid—they are composed more like a piece of music than a novel, to my mind. Carey (Lerios) is a very imaginative composer. He's a bit taken short by the number of cues he has to do. There is in the movie an enormous amount of music, but I don't think we are drowning the film with music. It's music which clarifies the story, which imposes the threat of Lilit upon our young characters even when she's not there—because the music carries her. It is a complimentary story-telling point instead of just an accompanying soundtrack."

The film should have a completed answer print by July 23, for a planned release this fall, following the successful pattern established last year by *Night of the Demons*. Whether *Night Angel* will follow in the footsteps of *Night of the Demons* in the sense of overemphasizing special effects remains to be seen. Clips from the rough-cut reveal some intriguing atmospheric sequences but also some heavy gore (slit throats, severed kneecaps). Dominique Girard, for his part, denied that the film simply exploits a combination of sex and violence: "It's not a question of exploitation; it's a question of analyzing our lives. I'm a storyteller; if there's a subject, I just look around at what is connecting to the subject, and sex and violence is surrounding us. When you pass someone in a corridor, these confrontations can be very violent in a way—even if they are passive physically; the heat after a look or a smile from someone can be violent on your heart."

"One can deal with this in an exploitative way, or one can deal with it by trying to make a point out of it, trying to set an example to the audience. If you follow this track of seduction, of wanting to buy everything with your sexual powers, then you're going to go wrong. That's basically what the film is saying, and that's not exploitative." □

BOB CLARK

Continued from page 31

who was also the basis for *Psycho*. In *Deranged* you feel for this character because he doesn't know he's murdering people. He thinks he's killing and skinning deer, and you see that in the film. That's where I had trouble with the film. You feel for him. It's chilling, because when he kills and mutilates people, you do feel something for him. It was too much.

HF: Was the ending changed?

BC: There were supposed to be subliminal shots of the deer being gutted, with shots of the girl, to show what the murderer saw. But we couldn't get a deer. We simply couldn't get one and we weren't willing to get someone to shoot one. We tried to get one that had been hit by a car. That ending would have softened it considerably for me. It would have shown his state of mind. A deer to him was no different. As it is, it's considerably more horrible. Robert Blossom also did a marvelous job with the character, so that makes it even worse.



Olivia Hussey in *Black Christmas*

HF: Did it do well when it was released?
BC: Not really. It was just too horrible for people. AIP released it. But I didn't want to be associated with it. Actually, Vincent Canby (of the *New York Times*) did a review of that film. He saw the film and thought, where did that movie come from? He talked about the consciousness behind the film, which is interesting because clearly the film works on several levels.

HF: Have you worked with Alan Ormsby since then?

BC: Yes. He worked on the script for *Porky's 2*, and he had a project I was going to produce for him that fell through. Alan hated directing. Making *Deranged* for \$200,000 was grueling work. But he came to realize that the only way to truly get control of his work was through directing. He's written a script called



Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things.

Papcorn which he plans to direct. It's a tongue-in-cheek horror film, the same sort of idea as *Deranged* but considerably more sophisticated. Sort of a *Friday the 13th* take-off.

HF: Was *Black Christmas* a big jump for you?

BC: *Black Christmas* was a big jump in sophistication, yes. And money. We made that one for \$450,000 in Toronto.

HF: Did you have a hand in the script?

BC: Yes. I didn't take credit but I actually did write it. People who know me recognize my humor in that film. Margot Kidder's character makes a joke about tortoiseshells making love for three days. That's my type of humor.

"We'd shoot all night and I'd spend the day guarding the set from kids who'd get in and vandalize it."

HF: *Black Christmas* is a very nasty film. You also made a comedy version of *A Christmas Carol*. Do you like Christmas?

BC: Oh yes, I could never do one of those killer Santa movies. That's very mean to kids. The thing that appealed to me about the holiday in *Black Christmas* was the element of isolation. Everyone in the film is going one place or another. No one knows where the other person is or should be. There's all this bustling going on outside the house. Yet inside, the house is very claustrophobic.

HF: *Black Christmas* has a lot of elements used in slasher films a couple of years later. There's a sorority house, shots from the killer's point-of-view, the strong female lead, the killer peering from inside the house. Do you think your film influenced future films?

BC: I don't know about that. But without blowing my horn too much, I think mine is better than most. When the female lead (played by Olivia Hussey) goes back into

the house to confront the killer, it's not because she's stupid or just another screaming victim. She knows what she's doing. She wants somebody to rescue her friends. She's a strong character, and one the audience understands. That's why I think audiences were so disturbed by the ending.

HF: Did you ever think of changing the ending?

BC: Warner Brothers was ferociously opposed to the ending. And commercially, I think they were right.

HF: What did they want to change? The fact that the killer remains alive and unknown? Or that the lead character is left to die?

BC: Both. But I think having the killer living on and remaining unknown is right. What audiences objected to was leaving this strong female character in dire jeopardy, having her survive everything and then leaving her alone and asleep in the house with the killer. I mean, she's going to die. That bothered people. I knew audiences would be upset, but maybe that's why the film is so effective.

HF: Where did that disturbing voice of the killer come from? Was it more than one person?

BC: Yes, it was actually three actors. The main voice was actor Nick Mancuso (*Ticket to Heaven*, *Heartbreakers*), who's gone on to a pretty good career since then. All three voices were combined together and electronically altered. We wanted to keep people guessing.

HF: How was working with John Saxon?

BC: John is an agreeable guy. He had taken over for Edmond O'Brien.

HF: What happened to O'Brien?

BC: I am an O'Brien fan. So I went after him and got him for the movie. And when he arrived, he was suffering from the middle stages of Alzheimer's Disease. He was just too sick. It was tragic. There was no way I could subject the man to ten-below-zero weather. So I had to replace him. I couldn't do it to the investors. I couldn't do it to Edmond. He just couldn't have done it. It was the most difficult thing I've ever had to do.

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A quick look at the delights—and the dregs—available in your local video store

THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS (aka PARDON ME, BUT YOUR TEETH ARE IN MY NECK)

1967 107 minutes
MGM/UA Home Video
Dir: Roman Polanski, Str: Jack MacGowan, Roman Polanski
Sharon Tate, Alfie Bass.

Even in the overcrowded field of vampire films, Roman Polanski's *Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967) stands out as a unique entry. The horror/comedy stars Polanski and a feeble-looking Jack MacGowan as a bumbling pair of self-proclaimed "vampire killers" who stumble across a coven of bloodsuckers while staying at a fairytale inn in the Bavarian mountains. A trail of blood eventually leads the pair to the castle of a courteous baron and his undead servants.



Roman Polanski

Polanski and MacGowan, sort of a European version of Laurel and Hardy, are hilarious in a series of slapstick routines. Though things never get too scary, *Fearless Vampire Killers* features enough original ideas (a Jewish and a homosexual vampire, for example) to keep even the most knowledgeable Dracula fan interested. For fans of the troubled director, the film is pure Polanski, with a requisite amount of sexually-tinged violence and black humor. It's not Polanski's best horror film (*Rosemary's Baby* gets that title), but it's easily his most enjoyable. Watch for an appearance by Sharon Tate, who

would die two years later at the hands of the Manson family. Bright cut when it was originally released, the film has been restored to its original form for video.

—Ian Johnston

Highly recommended

SPASMS

1981 (released in 1983)
92 minutes
Thorn-EMI
Dir: William Fruet Str: Peter Fonda, Oliver Reed, Kerrie Keane, Al Waxman.

This flick takes itself very seriously. No easy feat, considering this 1981 snake-on-the-loose movie has one of the most ridiculous premises since B-movies discovered radiation. The title refers to the effects of being bitten by a snake. Of course, the film's snake is no ordinary garden-variety serpent. It's a giant killer snake worshipped as a god by a tribe of generic jungle people. Not only does this reptile bite a lot of people, it psychically links itself to explorer Oliver Reed, giving him a lot of snake-perspective hallucinations. To cure himself, Reed calls in psychiatrist/leading man Peter Fonda and then has the snake shipped to the local university. Smart guy. The snake, of course, escapes and bumps off a bunch of nubile coeds before a final, fiery confrontation.



Last minute make-up touches on a victim.

Spasms is certainly no worse than all those rampaging monster films of the B50s. But it's played so straight (particularly by scenery-chewer Oliver Reed) that it isn't half as enjoyable. There's a

nice acting turn by Al Waxman (*Cagney and Lacy*) as a sleazeball; at least he seems to be in on the joke. Not one to learn from his acting mistakes, Reed would do battle with a smaller but equally deadly snake the next year in *Venom*.

—Ian Johnston

Not recommended

DEATH WARMED UP

1984 83 minutes
Vestron Video
Dir: David Blyth Str: Michel Hurst, Margaret Umbers, David Letch.

There's an inclination to call *Death Warmed Up* a New Zealand *Re-Animator*. But where the American film about resurrecting the dead was memorable for its originality and over-the-edge gore, the more conventional *Death Warmed Up* seems content with just offering up gore, and lots of it. The film, directed by David Blyth, centers on the brilliant but-crazed doctor Archer Howell and his experiments with death. After killing his cautious partner, Howell scampers off to an island hospital to continue his work on "Trans Cranial Applications." Years later, the kid he framed for the murder heads to the island, bent on revenge, only to run into a group of confused zombies in the early stages of revolution. Typical *Night of the Living Dead* events occur, with lots of dismemberments and spurting blood.

Like *Re-Animator*, *Death Warmed Up* is fast-paced and entertaining, but it lacks the compelling characters to be half as involving. The mad doctor, easily the most interesting character, appears only briefly in the last half of the film. Several other interesting characters (including Bruno Lawrence, who seems to be in every New Zealand film, as a malfunctioning zombie) are also given a minimum of screen time. *Death Warmed Up* gives us instead endless shots of boring teens running through dark corridors. Entertaining, certainly, but not the memorable film it could have been.

—Ian Johnston

Recommended

PATRICK

1978 115 minutes

Harmony Vision

Dir: Richard Franklin, Str: Robert Helpmann, Susan Penhaligon, Rod Mullinar.

Do distributors think North Americans are so stupid they can't understand an accent? Apparently so, if *Patrick* is any indication. This Australian thriller, directed by Richard Franklin (*Psycho 2*, *Link*), has somewhere along the line been dubbed by American actors. That's too bad, because *Patrick* is an intriguing reworking of *Carrie*. The Patrick (Rod Mullinar) of the title is a young man who lapses into a coma after killing his mother. Several years later, a kindly nurse, played by Susan Penhaligon, becomes convinced her patient is conscious and talking to her through her typewriter. She's right. In fact, Patrick is not only typing his messages, he's psychically attacking anyone who threatens his relationship with his nurse.

Franklin's camera work and editing, obviously Hitchcock-inspired, rings a lot of tension out of the material, despite being hampered by an immobile lead character. On the negative side, the ending is rather abrupt and familiar, and the previously mentioned, Americanized soundtrack makes all the dialogue sound as if it were taped in a studio somewhere in the Midwest. It probably was.

—Ian Johnston
Not recommended

THE COMPANY OF WOLVES

1984 95 minutes

Vestron Video

Dir: Neil Jordan Str: Sarah Patterson, David Warren and Angela Lansbury

There's an inherent sexuality in the chase between slaving beast and comely woman, the primal man leaping for the ultimate consummation. *The Company of Wolves* depicts this eternal pursuit in a string of fairy tale vignettes, stripping the werewolf mythos to its Freudian essentials. For director Neil Jordan, human into animal is but a metaphor for sexual awakening, where in this case the innocent Little Red Riding Hood secretly asks to be deflowered by the lupine prince.

Rosaleen's (Sarah Patterson) pubescent head is filled with such dark fantasies that, when she dreams, she passes into a timeless village where either enchantment or death await her and the rest of those who stray from a forested path. Every object and person from her real world might be present here, but this is a twisted Wile-

ard of Oz existence. Mom and dad openly have intercourse, man-sized dolls grapple at their mistresses and wolves claim Rosaleen's jealous sister. The girl's fears increase as her desires are quenched with Grandmother's (Angela Lansbury) unceasing morality fables, whose mottoes are "Never trust a man whose eyebrows meet" and "The sweetest tongue has the sharpest tooth."



But Rosaleen's thoughts of wolves are much kinder, as she imagines herself a she-animal trying to escape a world that's aghast at her furred, nude body. For all its presto-changeo effects and burning-eyed creatures, *The Company of Wolves* possesses its heroine's sympathetic nature. These beasts are far more natural than the dream villagers, free to run, hunt and metamorphose.

Few on the verge of sexual awakening survive the wolves, and those who do are chained to a life of child-filled drudgery. Careful not to express these themes with overt carnality, Jordan throws his passion into the film's gloriously overblown imagery. Granny's head is knocked off by the big bad wolf and explodes into thoughtless ash. Doll houses and phallic toadstools abound in the woods, eggs batching out hemoculuses. And in the film's most imaginative moment, a sophisticate in a limousine drives up to an unlucky lad, offering a potion to put "hair" on his chest. Jordan has managed to create a hypnotic, all-encompassing world from his portent-filled acts.

In the movie's incredible climax, the lip-stick-smudged Rosaleen awakens to find that the wolves have crossed from the dream forest to her Victorian house when a magnificent beast shatters through a window to claim her. A simple-minded horror picture would depict this scream-filled moment as bloody death, but in *The Company of Wolves*'s elegiac framework, it's only the terror of onrushing adulthood. The monster has gotten the girl at last.

—Daniel Schweiger
Highly recommended

ENDANGERED SPECIES

1982 97 minutes

MGM/UA Home Video

Dir: Alan Rudolph Str: Robert Urich, JoBeth Williams and Paul Dooley

Whenever a cow is found vivisectioned, irate ranchers usually blame it on spacemen or devil cultists. But what if these mutilations signalled an invasion by evil sciences within our control? *Endangered Species* separates hard facts from tabloid fodder to ask this disturbing question, one that's suspensefully answered with brutal logic.

Burned-out NYC cop Ruben Castle (Robert Urich) hopes to escape city scum in the wilds of Colorado, and only finds that villainy exists there, too. Though the hapless cattlemen believe supernatural forces are chewing up their cows, the military-wise Ruben notices tell-tale signs of such germ warfare experimentation that had supposedly been outlawed since 1959. When "satanists" conveniently burn a barn to throw the detective off-track, he instead becomes convinced that. Bannan County has become the testing ground for the next Cold War, a battle that our side intends to win at any cost.

Setting up the picture like a forbidding version of *Close Encounters*, director Alan Rudolph indoctrinates viewers to his gripping mystery as if they were the befuddled townspeople. Hallucinatory lights flash about the sky, grappling hooks seize the cows and ray beams strike to the accompaniment of eerie synthesizers. It's a clever and fascinating approach to the conspiracy genre in cow's clothing, as indicative of Reagan's barbaric use of high-tech as *Three Days of the Condor* was of Nixon's dirty politics.

Like Robert Redford in *Condor*, Urich's hard-bitted Castle is set up as the appalled common man against the corrupt system. Wittily paired with butch sheriff "Harry" Purdue (JoBeth Williams) and a conspiracy buff editor (Paul Dooley), Castle thrillingly fights for us against the Republican crazies and their stealth helicopter. His conviction of bringing them to justice, even if he has to invade a Norad missile site to do it, forcefully moves viewers against a military complex gone berserk. By pointing out how similar the animals' nervous systems are to ours, repeatedly flashing between herds of cattle and herds of people, Rudolph drives his message home with a postscript of how 30,000 mutilations have taken place since the "ban." It's not been proven whether they're the work of flying saucer mercenaries, but as Castle warns, "A little paranoia never hurt anyone."

—Daniel Schweiger
Highly Recommended

EYES WITHOUT A FACE

The "mad" doctor is re-examined for France's masterpiece of poetic horror

—By Daniel Schweiger—

Eyes Without A Face (aka *Les Yeux Sans Visage*; American version, *The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus*)
Interama Video Classics
(subtitled)
(Champs Elysees/Lux Film, 1959)
Dir: Georges Franju Str: Pierre Brasseur, Edith Scob, Alida Valli

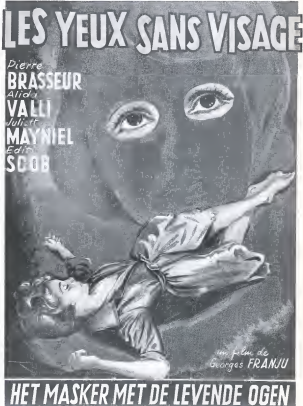
Video has proven itself to be a horror picture grave-robbing, digging unadulterated classics up from their film-vault crypts. Now Interama has blown the dust off the subtitled *Eyes Without A Face*, revealing a shining example of the genre at its disturbing best. Previously available in a bastardized American print as *The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus*, Georges Franju's chilling tale of warped vanity has spawned imitators from *The Awful Dr. Orloff* (1962) to *The Diabolical Dr. Z* (1966). None however, have understood or matched the surreal moodiness which Franju uses to trap viewers in his elegant parade of horrors.

The doctor uses "hetero grafts" to transplant live skin tissue onto her damaged features.

Christiane (Edith Scob), once beautiful, is cursed to wear a sleek mask through which now only her anguished pupils can peer, the result of an accident caused by her father, the surgeon Dr. Genessier (Pierre Brasseur). Vowing to cure the daughter he's disfigured, the doctor uses "hetero grafts" to transplant live skin tissue onto her damaged features. But in order to work, the grafts have to be fresh, and to maintain a supply of fresh tissue the doctor kidnaps local girls to serve as unwilling donors.

Though his procedure has worked on the doctor's partially disfigured assistant Louise (Alida Valli), it won't take to Christiane's completely mutilated features. This has led to several faceless bodies washing up for the police and increasing dementia for Christiane with every transformation from beauty to hideousness. But no matter if she is a mental wreck; the doctor won't stop until his revolutionary cure has succeeded.

Don't judge Genessier too harshly, for the rationality of his unspeakable actions



clearly differentiates him from a psycho with a scalpel. Played with an intense, warped nobility, Brasseur's surgeon really views his techniques as a boon for his daughter and all humanity. And for any great medical advance, sacrifices have to be made.

The doctor is a man of divided loves. Like any father, he cherishes his daughter and will do anything to insure her future happiness. But as a surgeon, his mind is enslaved by science and its cold methodologies. Experimental dogs are stockpiled near his laboratory like so much meat, their cries always echoing through the air. However, Genessier does realize his "patients" to be physically human, and takes care not to inflict unnecessary pain on

them. Unlike the dogs, he won't put people to sleep. But it's a fate that would surely be preferable, as the girls die of complications or suicide anyway. This Socratic morality is lost on the case's detectives, who willingly endanger an attractive shoplifter to ferret out Genessier.

Christiane is the doctor's most pathetic victim. Taken from her hospital bed and "murdered" to throw off suspicion, she is truly a lost soul. Cut off from her fiancé, Christiane rejects her father's love because it isn't genuine (if he really cared, she'd be out of her misery). Even Genessier can't bear to look at the state she's in, always urging Christiane to wear the mask. Even when temporarily repaired, the detached woman promises to "live for

the others" instead of herself. Feeling more kinship with the lab animals than the operating room's victims, Christiane has practically lost her human identity. As her thin, white-gowned form glides about the house, she appears like a spectral bird. Christiane's only act of self-determination climactically occurs as she releases the dogs and the last abductee, then vanishes into the forest as doves flutter about her.

There is a horrible darkness lying just below the film's surface.

Eyes Without A Face shares her voyeuristic nature, a quality that links all of Franju's pictures. Having gained shock notoriety for his 1949 documentary *Blood of Animals* (*La Sang des Bêtes*), which compared slaughterhouse work to everyday existence, the director's approach here is a similar mix of clinical jolts and arty intellectuality. There is a horrible darkness lying just below the film's surface, waiting to engulf the unprepared. Underneath the antiseptic hospital and gorgeous mansion is an expressionistic nightmare. Arches curve into the dungeon's crumbling stone, secret chambers await to confine "patients." In an eerily touching sequence, Christiane wanders from heaven to hell as she leaves her baroque environs to comfort the dogs. Like a documentary, Franju follows her trip from point A to B, allowing no behind-the-camera emotions to seep through as she long-

ingly hugs the animals. The impact of the scene is left entirely to the viewer's sympathy. When Christiane goes to look upon her newest dance, the strapped woman's eyes open for a ghastly flash of the girl's pulverized features, which mercifully go out of focus.

It's a swift transition from melancholia to terror, and *Eyes Without A Face* challenges us to retain Christiane's reluctance to the ghastliness about her. Though trimmed after its initial preview, the film's gore is numbingly visceral. What makes it even more powerful is Franju's treatment of brutality with the apathy of a medical exam. As Christiane's face disintegrates, he portrays the rotting effect with still photos and Genesser's bookish narration. The face-cutting procedure is shown from pencil tracing to forcep lift, and Franju once again goes to black before complete revulsion sets in. Such distancing measures help to keep a dry wit to the picture's carnage.

Though Franju made *Eyes Without A Face* at the height of France's new wave, the film has more in common with Cocteau's *Blood of A Poet* (1970) than Godard's *Breathless* (1960). Every scene has lyricism, with Maurice Jarre's score accentuating the Gothic romanticism. There's nothing to remind one of a typical horror film; even the police subplot goes nowhere. Instead, *Eyes Without A Face* is tragedy of a Shakespearean order. Unrequited love and desire must explode into violence, the characters rushing to their moralistic fates. Franju has provided this dance of insanity with an unblinking poetic vision, crafting beauty and brutality for its maximum psychological impact. □

LASER REVIEW

FORBIDDEN PLANET

Reviewing the Criterion Collection of laser discs is like reviewing a Lamborghini, a Rolex or a Nikon... simply the best in their field. By and large, all the titles in the collection are meticulously researched and produced with a true concern for the art. The first up for review is the newly remastered Cinemascope version of *Forbidden Planet*.

Forbidden Planet is one of those spectacular films that should only be viewed on a big screen or at the very least in full Cinemascope. (Others include *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Ben-Hur*). The Criterion version, besides being in Scope and digital sound, is CAV, so you have the full range of effects, such as slow and fast motion, freeze frame, etc. This edition was transferred from MGM's 35mm intermediate positive and was digitally mastered from a 2-track stereo Dolby-encoded magnetic soundtrack.

What's most important was seeing those fantastic images in their full Cinemascope glory. Seeing the C57D landing or the amazing Krell labs, cropped so almost half the picture is lost, is bad enough. But the battle with the invisible Id monster, the belching Disney animation, the crackling force field fence, the blue-white neutron beams slamming into the mountains... not seeing this in full Scope is a waste! If you can't see *Forbidden Planet* in a movie theater, this is the next best thing.

The disc is manufactured by 3M Corporation. Picture and sound quality are excellent. As if this wasn't enough, the supplemental section presents rare footage from the work print not included in the finished film, the original screen treatment *Royal Planet*, a *Forbidden Planet* essay and a wealth of rare, behind-the-scenes production information and publicity photos. The film is 99 minutes on two discs.

— Ted A. Bohn

HORRORFAN SURVEY

As a new magazine, we'd like to get to know you, what interests you, so we can make our pages as useful and entertaining as possible. This questionnaire is designed to tell us something about yourself and your preferences. Please take a few minutes to fill it out now. Thanks so much.

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CLAUDE RAINES

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In the years to come Rains would move from stage to film and to the newest medium—television. On the tube, Rains cut a broad path, giving very varied performances, from his role in a modern-dress version of *Antigone* to an episode of *Rain-forest*; Rains even made an appearance in *The Godfather of Harlem*. He also produced recordings.

In 1960 Rains played the professor in a new version of *The Last World*, a film in which special effects wizard Willis O'Brien used live lizards with make-up to portray prehistoric beasts in the jungles of the Amazon.

Over the next few years, Rains took on small roles until his final screen appearance in George Stevens' *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, in which he played Herod the Great.

He had been villain to the last.

On May 30th, 1967, when Claude Rains died of an intestinal hemorrhage, the world lost one of its truly great actors. □

The Invisible Man (1933)
Crime Without Passion (1934)
The Man Who Reclaimed His Head (1935)
The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1935)
The Clairvoyant (1935)
The Last Outpost (1935)
Hearts Divided (1936)
Anthony Adverse (1936)
Stolen Holiday (1937)
The Prince and the Pauper (1937)
They Won't Forget (1937)
God Is Where You Find It (1938)
The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938)
White Banners (1938)
Four Daughters (1938)
They Made Me A Criminal (1938)
Juarez (1939)
Daughter's Courageous (1939)
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)
Four Wives (1939)
Saturday's Children (1940)
The Sea Hawk (1940)
The Lady with Red Hair (1940)
Four Mothers (1941)
Here Comes Mr. Jordan (1941)
The Wolf Man (1941)
Kings Row (1942)
Moonlight (1942)
Now, Voyager (1942)
Cannibals (1942)
Forever and a Day (1943)
The Phantom of the Opera (1943)
Passage to Marseille (1944)
Mr. Skeffington (1944)
Caesar and Cleopatra (1944)
Strange Love (1945)
This Love of Ours (1945)
Notorious (1946)
Deception (1946)
Angel on My Shoulder (1946)
The Unsuspected (1947)
One Woman's Story (1949)
Rope of Sand (1949)
White Tower (1950)
Where Danger Lives (1953)
Sealed Cargo (1951)
Paris Express (1953)
Lisbon (1954)
The Earth Is Mine (1959)
The Last World (1960)
Lawrence of Arabia (1962)
Twilight of Honor (1963)
Battle of Honor (1963)
The Greatest Story Ever Told (1963)

HALLOWEEN

Continued from page 26

him immediately hire Dominique. "Since I was a foreigner, I told him that I appreciated his open-mindedness in allowing me to direct a popular American film," Girard said. "The first thing I did was to analyze the *Halloween* movies, and then to compare them with the *Nightmare* and *Friday* the 13th series. I ended up dropping *Halloween V*'s original script because it tried too hard to compete with Freddy and Jason.



"My goal is not to make an explicit horror movie, though *Halloween V*'s premise might fall into that trap. I wanted to go for a real Hitchcockian flavor with this edition, and show how a few characters and their community react under the Shape's pressure, a boogeyman who's always picking them off. But I'm not going to kill 30 people here, just seven. What makes *Halloween V* artistic is the sense that I really care for these victims and dig into their emotions. I kill one of the main characters right off, which makes the Shape invincible and gives the movie a real sense of jeopardy. *Halloween V* is going to be a fast film. The camera is constantly moving and grabbing people."

Having narrowly avoided a steadicam attack, Wendy Kaplan breathed in the mineral-based fog that stealthily enveloped her. After five weeks of night shooting, she felt like dropping, but still retained the giddy energy of a promising actress given her first break. Like Jamie Lee Curtis, Kaplan's wildly emotive performance won't leave her stranded in the genre. Stepping into Ellie

Cornell's running shoes, her Tina is at first pursued by the Shape, then takes a heroic stand to save Jamie's life. "*Halloween V*'s going to be a great stepping stone," Wendy remarked. "I've got a great character who goes the whole range—from ecstatically happy to miserable and dying. Instead of the guys who just want to punch Michael out, Tina has to overcome her deepest fears to beat him. Women are better at getting scared in horror films because of their sympathetic nature, and the genre treats us like sex objects because of that. While the women in *Halloween V* might be sexy, they've also got very strong personalities."

None could be more forceful than Danielle Harris, the savvy 12-year-old who plays Jamie. Already a veteran of TV's *One Life To Live* and Shape survivor from the previous film, Harris was eagerly awaiting her call to the set. "In the last film, all I did was run away from the Shape and scream. There's a lot more for me this time, because I see through Michael's eyes. I also feel sorry for him, because he's my uncle. There's a passion between us. It's like having a relative who murders people. You feel sad that he does it, but you don't want him to die, too." Jamie expresses this emotion in the film's climax, when Michael presents her with a specially fitted coffin. "He turns back to evil, even after crying in front of me. The Shape doesn't want my goodness to get to him."

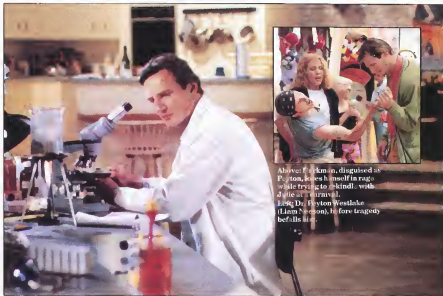
Danielle was having the time of her life being continually threatened with knives, curs and bayonets. "I started the character of Jamie, and I'd really like to finish her. She's sweet and innocent by day, but scared and a little evil at night. But I don't want her to become totally bad, because I don't think a nine-year-old should go around killing people. I want Jamie to show confidence in herself. I think all kids should."

To Danielle, the best way for children to prove their courage would be to sit through *Halloween V*. "I think they should let us into horror movies. Kids shouldn't be scared when they see them, although I know a few who've freaked out. Thrillers are the best for me, because it's easy to act scared. I want to do all the *Halloween*s until I get old!"

Danielle won't have to worry. The makers of *Halloween V* have jerry-rigged the film with brief hints of a silver-booted stranger, a possible relative of Michael Myers who will insure that the Shape survives the bullets, pitchforks and steel nets that are thrown at him here. By insuring the series' survival with a classy approach to what could easily be slasher shock, Michael Myers will probably last longer than any of his body-count competitors. And though he didn't get his barn victims tonight, rest assured that the Shape will claim them tomorrow, as he promises to do every All Hallow's Eve for years to come. □

DARKMAN

Evil Dead's Sam Raimi directs a shadowy story of ill-fated love



Above: *Darkman*, disguised as Peyton, loses himself in rage while trying to rekindle with Julie at a carnival. Left: Dr. Peyton Westlake (Liam Neeson), before tragedy befalls him.

By Kyle Counts

"We're about to step back through time," announced writer/director Sam Raimi as he walked past the bombed-out laboratory set created by production designer Randy Ser and art director Phil Dagort for his new film, *Darkman*. Just beyond the approaching wall is "the exact same place at an earlier, happier time"—a neatly appointed workspace with various kinds of lab equipment. On the back wall hang framed pictures of *Darkman*'s principal characters, Peyton Westlake (played by *The Good Mother*'s Liam Neeson) and Julie Hastings (Frances McDormand, Oscar-nominated for *Mississippi Burning*), which showcase the pair in the aforementioned earlier, happier time.

In a few minutes Neeson was to appear on set, his hands and one side of his face made-up to simulate charred flesh. That afternoon's bit of business would require Peyton, in shock from being dunked by

thugs into a vat of acid, to crawl on the laboratory floor toward an explosive device that has been left by the gang's slimeball leader, Durant (Larry Drake of *L.A. Law*). Needless to say, he doesn't defuse it in time.

All this sounds intensely dramatic, certainly, but not quite what we've come to expect from Raimi, a Detroit-based filmmaker who, at 22, sent shockwaves through the Cannes Film Festival with the international unveiling of *The Evil Dead*, a blood-

Raimi insists that he isn't forsaking his audience—he's just maturing.

soaked horror/shocker made for a paltry \$330,000. More ghoulish fun would be forthcoming in the inevitable, more ambitious sequel, *Evil Dead II*. Where are the zombies? The melting demons? The dummy heads with chicken intestines?

Raimi insists that he isn't forsaking his

Larry Drake plays the elegantly psychopathic Durant, whose persuasive activities transform Dr. Peyton Westlake into *Darkman*.



audience—he's just maturing. Now 29, he is knee-deep in the most complex—and, at a reported budget of \$10 million, the most costly—film of his career, one that has attracted a roster of impressive names on both sides of the camera. If all goes according to plan, *Darkman* will be released in the summer of 1990 by Universal, thus signaling the end of his low-budget auteur days.

While *Darkman* has horrific elements, it is not a horror film, *per se*. Raimi himself isn't sure how to pigeonhole it. "I'm not sure what classification it falls under," said the director, dressed in sneakers and a casual jacket. "While it has a lot of action scenes, it's more a love story than anything. It's very simple tale about a man who's in love with a woman; he suffers a tragic disfigurement, both of body and soul, and he tries to recapture that which he has lost. There are also a lot of elements of other stories in it: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Dr. Jekyll* and *Mr. Hyde*, even a little of the Frankenstein monster, in the sense that you feel for the Darkman as opposed to being afraid of him. At least I hope the audience responds to him that way."

"I think he's a memorable bad guy, not just a generic heavy" said Drake.

The story concerns a scientist (Neesen) who has developed a breakthrough liquid skin for burn victims. He's happily in love with his childhood sweetheart, Julie, a corporate attorney who, as the film opens, is putting together a deal for a Donald Trump-type real estate magnate named Strack (played by Australian actor Colin Friels) that will allow him to embark on a massive development project, a monument to the family name. One day Julie discovers a memo which reveals that Strack has been paying off a number of high-placed government officials who pose a threat to his multi-million-dollar venture. She leaves the incriminating document at Peyton's lab, and a company hitman (Drake) and his henchman who have followed her there, force their way in. Unable to locate the memo, they torture Peyton by forcing his face and hands into an electrified nutrient bath, leaving his skin hideously scarred. In the process they also blow up his lab, and the force of the explosion sends Peyton flying through the skylight and into the river below. He is left for dead, soon to return—as the Darkman.

Reconstructing his lab and using his invention to create a variety of cunning disguises, he plots revenge on the mob that has forced him to become an embittered creature of the night. He will reunite with



Tony Gardner's special-effects make-up.



Darkman recreates his Peyton Westlake persona to visit his grieving sweetheart at his gravesite.



Darkman peeks out from the window of his hideout.



Darkman in his secret recreated lab.

Julie, but their love, like that between the Beauty and the Beast, will become fraught with obstacles born out of tragic circumstances.

The film is being made under the Deckman Productions banner—a company formed expressly for this production and fronted by Raimi and Robert Tapert, producer of both *Evil Dead* movies, whom Raimi met while attending Michigan State University. Raimi admitted that while it feels “strange” to be making a film with so high (by low-budget standards) a price tag, it has its advantages. “Robert and I hoped

that if we could work with the finest talent available, we could make an even better picture. So the biggest advantage, as we saw it, to making the transition to the higher-budget arena was that we could afford a high-caliber cast and technical crew, right down to the prop-makers. Aside from Liam, Frances, Larry and Colin, we also have Bill Pope (director of numerous music videos) as director of photography and Larry Hamlin and Terry Gardiner doing the special effects make-up. Their budget alone is \$400,000.”

Aside from having more money to spend

this time around (Raimi joked that now he can afford “two of everything—two chairs, two desks, two video monitors...”), he feels the big difference between *Darkman* and his earlier efforts is the script.

“What sets *Darkman* apart from my other films is that this time I’m trying to tell a story with real characters and a real story that the audience can follow. I feel that the audience has been displeased with my pictures. I think at the 50-minute point they’ve been saying to themselves, ‘So what? How many more times can he throw a decomposed corpse at us or do something tricky

with the camera—this isn't going anywhere.' So, as an experiment, I'm trying to tell a story that builds and has emotional resonance. I've never attempted it until now, so it's a very complex task for me. I don't mind telling you, I'm scared. I'm terrified. In fact, I'm shaking in my boots."

The story's emotional thrust, of course, is the relationship between Peyton and Julie. When the police fail to recover Peyton's body following the lab explosion, Julie assumes that he has perished in the ensuing blaze. He winds up, ironically enough, in a burn ward. Out of empathy for the unbearable pain he is forced to endure, his doctors sever a nerve in his brain that controls his response to pain. Peyton no longer feels physical pain, but now he is prone to fits of rage that give him almost superhuman strength. After spending months in hiding, he reappears to Julie, wearing a mask of his old face devised using a holographic reconstruction process.

"The unfortunate thing is, this new skin mask is unstable," explained Raimi. "It's photo sensitive and can only last 98 minutes in the light. So, after 98 minutes of time spent with his former love, he's forced to retreat again to the shadows. He's such a hideous thing now that she would surely recoil in horror if she were to learn the nature of his true identity. He's gone from being a very happy, philanthropic type of person to one who is confused, alienated and full of anger. It's no accident that I used the parallel of *Phantom of the Opera* in describing the picture's emotional slant, since the story is extremely operatic." Incidentally, the final shooting script will probably bear "100 names," according to Raimi, including his own and his brother's, Ivan, a doctor in Ohio, because many writers contributed

to the nine drafts that were developed.

Raimi is delighted to have enlisted the services of such a prestigious cast to bring his story to life, though he's not quite sure how it all came to pass. "I don't have much pull in Hollywood, so I guess it had something to do with the script. I think they liked the script and they felt that I was open to their input and was a reasonable individual to work with. I can't really get into their heads beyond that; I guess you'd have to ask them."

"I feel that the audience has been displeased with my pictures," admitted Raimi.

Larry Drake's role as Robert Durant, the sadistic leader of a gang of racketeering drug dealers, is yet another stretch for the *L.A. Law* regular, who most recently played a psychotic Santa Claus on HBO's *Tales From the Crypt*. Drake said it was indeed the script that drew him to *Darkman*.

"I thought the script was very visual and had a great sense of style," the actor commented as he was made-up for an upcoming scene. "I honestly didn't know who Sam was at the time I read it. When I realized that he was one of the authors, I figured if he was half as good a director as he was a writer, I wanted to be a part of his movie."

When asked what else attracted him to the role, Drake replied: "The fact that my character is a great dresser and I could buy the clothes when the movie wraps. No, seriously, I think he's a memorable bad guy, not just a generic heavy. He's extremely

evil. This is a man who chops his victim's fingers off with a cigar cutter and throws Peyton into a vat of acid just to be nasty. But after playing crazies in two films in a row, I think I'm ready to play what I call your basic, John Lithgow role—a nice guy with a family, someone who doesn't wear a lot of appliances."

Larry Hamlin feigns a stab in the heart when the word "appliances" is uttered. While he knows Drake is joking, he's well aware that make-up effects artists aren't often the most popular personnel on a movie set because of the various tortures they inflict upon the actors. Although Drake will have to be heavily made-up for the show, and fitted with special contact lenses and a wig, it is Liam Neeson who has had to spend the longest hours in the make-up chair, under the supervision of Hamlin and his partner, Tony Gardner.

Hamlin didn't want to draw on other references when designing the character's disfigurement. "I feel very uncomfortable comparing our make-up design for the *Darkman* to that of other films. Whatever you do, don't call him Freddy. He's really more a *Phantom of the Opera*-type image, because three-quarters of his face is covered and the rest is ravaged. There's sort of a majestic terrible-ness about him. He looks like someone who was once human, rather than a monster from outer space."

Asked about working with Liam Neeson, Hamlin offered, "He's an intense actor—I'm in awe of him. When I'm around him and he's in character, I try to leave him alone. If I have to do something, I just do it—I don't try to engage him in conversation. If he wants to make eye contact and talk, it's really his call. Considering what

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Darkman battles Durant to the death.



CARNIVAL OF SOULS

Continued from page 29

death's inevitability. Neither science nor religion offer a redemptive solution to Mary's predicament. During the frenzy of Mary's organ recital, the camera cuts to a religious adage, "Cast Out Devils," inscribed on a stained-glass window in the church; the pious platitude is as unhelpful and mundane as the doctor's therapy ("...that experience must have been a serious, emotional shock," he analyzes, referring to Mary's miraculous escape from the car accident), and may have been inserted as a supernatural red herring. The doctor and priest meet near the conclusion of the film, joining the police in an effort to rationalize Mary's disappearance; both exchange defeated expressions. Analysis and angels are no match for the bleak, irrevocable reality of death.

Carnival was ignored during its theatrical release, but television broadcasts have ignited a spate of homages and imitations. One movie that has often been compared to *Carnival* is *Night of the Living Dead*; however, the similarity is obvious only in the black-and-white topography of the rural settings photographed in the preludes of each movie. *Night* is stylistically polarized from Harvey's movie, wielding its violence with a suitably Spartan mode of filmmaking. *Sole Survivor* (1984) was little more than a lame remake of *Carnival*, substituting an airplane tragedy as the catalyst for "soul searching." *Dead of Night* (1989), a two-part, made-for-TV movie, was an anemic encore of *Carnival*'s scenarios; the star of the film, Lindsay Wagner, is rescued from "the other side." *Carnival*'s influence may have been more subtly laced in the hauntings of *Ghost Story* (1981). In *Carnival*, water is a recurrent motif for Mary's fluctuation between life and death (e.g. the river, which is the border between Mary's "rebirth" and death). Also, Mary twice retreats to a park in her exodus from the "limbo" world of silence; a fountain, and later a sprinkler, are visible at the conclusion of her odyssey. *Ghost Story* reprises the concept, prefacing the appearances of a spectral temptress with water (overflowing bathtub, et al.); similar to Mary, *Ghost Story*'s heroine (Alicia Krige) died as a result of drowning.

Nearly 30 years after its original debut, *Carnival of Souls* remains an unswerving, scary movie. It restores pride in the Horror Cinema. Herk Harvey worked with little else than the courage to experiment with genre conventions, and the raw talent to squeeze a classic out of a non-existent budget. □

BOB CLARK

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HF: What was your next project?

BC: There was *Breaking Point*, with Bo Svenson. It was my last violent film. It was a difficult film to make. But for a film shot for \$800,000, it came out OK.

HF: How did *Murder by Decree* come together?

BC: That I generated myself. I came up with the story, and brought the production together.

HF: You certainly were dealing with well-worn territory. Even the idea of Sherlock Holmes tackling Jack the Ripper wasn't too new.

BC: Yes, but I thought I could take a different angle. At the time, there was a lot of talk about Jack the Ripper being royalty. I also liked the idea of royalty being under assault, and the elements of occult. The whole film is really about the meaning of power.

HF: How did you assemble such an impressive cast?

BC: Good luck. It took a while. I worked on it a while and eventually everyone fell into place. I've got James Mason, (David) Hemmings, (John) Gielgud, Christopher Plummer, Donald Sutherland and Susan Clark. How could I go wrong?

HF: Were there any ego problems during filming?

BC: God no, everyone was just great. James Mason—what can you say about him? He was a perfect gentleman, and a marvelous actor.

HF: You drew your best reviews for *Murder by Decree*, but the film really didn't catch on at the box office. Any idea why?

BC: I don't know, to tell the truth, I didn't think much about it. It's a great film. I quite rightly regard it as my best work, my biggest triumph so far.

HF: Since *Murder by Decree*, you haven't done anything even remotely close to the horror genre. Why is that?

BC: I wanted to move on. I'd done horror films. Still, I'm glad I did horror films. They're the greatest training in the world. Making horror films requires a great deal of editing discipline and attention to rhythm. I think some of my early films are my best work. I've no regrets.

HF: Can you tell us anything about your next film?

BC: It's called *Loose Cannons*. Gene Hackman plays a hard, grizzled veteran whose teamed with a young genius played by Dan Aykroyd. But what they don't tell Hackman's character is that Aykroyd's character has an emotional problem. Every time he's under pressure, he reverts to multiple personalities. I think it's going to be the most bizarre of all my films. □

BUGS

Continued from page 17

hope for redemption—Brundle is dead, Veronica is carrying his probably affected child, and Borneo, who came to save her, is crippled—and the desolation lingers long after the movie ends.

Cronenberg's masterly direction enhances the mood of emotional, as well as physical, devastation. His camera can irritate a mournful observer, slowly panning over the disorderly lab, or it can jump and lurch with the audience during moments of terror. He creates sympathy for the monster, only to play it against the gruesomeness on-screen. Goldblum pulls off a credible portrayal as Brundle,



playing it straight even when the script occasionally wanders. As a whole, *The Fly* easily surpasses other bug films in credibility, atmosphere and final effect.

The fate of Veronica's fly-child is the basis for *The Fly II* (89), which takes the story on a purer sci-fi course and away from the deeper, philosophical messages. Martin Brundle (Erick Stoltz of *Mash*), born with both bug and human genes, grows at a highly accelerated pace: at five, he's almost an adult and highly intelligent. Martin's eventual transformation is gentler and quicker than his father's, and the resulting creature—courtesy of director Chris Walas' handwork—is both logical and terrifying. The dinosaur-like fly, still housing Martin's smarts, has a touching compassion for dogs and a blood-thirsty need for vengeance.

Several memorable moments make this movie above average, such as the enormous fly-beast stroking a dog's head with a huge claw. Most prominent is the last scene, clearly reminiscent of Todd Browning's *Freddie* (32), when the camera dolries into a filthy observation cell to settle on a twisted, half-human creature, the victim of its own overweening pride. Unfortunately, in spite of this and Stoltz's unusual conviction as Brundle, the story is thin and predictable, and the sequel can't hold a fly swatter up to Cronenberg's original. □ continued on page 66

PHANTOM

Continued from page 38

Little, a USC film school graduate, has shown extraordinary versatility, going from an Emmy for his ABC-TV documentary *Spies* to such horror pictures as *Halloween 4*. Before shooting *The Phantom*, Little went back to the film archives for research. "I watched all the previous *Phantoms* except the Herbert Lom picture, which I just couldn't find anywhere. To my mind, it's just not on tape. I certainly looked carefully at the Chaney version, and at the Claude Rains version, and part of the TV version with Maximilian Schell. The thing that I realized was that the Claude Rains/Universal version was a disappointment at almost every level. In the Chaney version, the bottom line is that Chaney himself, through what he did with his performance and make-up, is the show. Beyond his sense of performance, it's very slow in the first half and kind of gets going later."

Star Robert Englund felt that his aim in this latest version of *The Phantom* was "not to try and top all of the other film versions, but to successfully reinterpret it. I wanted to cross-breed all the other past projects and create what I call 'the best of the Phantom.'"

Englund's co-star is Jill Schoelen, best known for her role as a young daughter resentful of her mother's new husband in the 1987 thriller, *The Stepfather*. Little was delighted with her performance as Christine. "I think there's a very deceptive quality about her. . . Initially what she's doing seems simple, almost plain, but the more scenes you play with her, the more she seems to draw the audience in. She's very much a movie actress and I think she's really going to be able to draw in people, their emotional attachment. There's nothing limpetish about her, yet at the same time she's innocent and vulnerable. That's a tricky combination."

The make-up artist responsible for the Phantom's skin grafts and facial mutations is 26-year-old Kevin Yagher, who teamed with Englund on *Nightmare on Elm Street 2* and *Nightmare 3*. His latest project is con-

An intriguing element of the production involves the location shooting of *The Phantom* in Hungary.

structing an animatronic puppet character for the HBO series, *Tales From the Crypt*.

Yagher analyzes this most recent Phantom, and describes the murderous technique. "In this film version, the Phantom goes out on the street, kills people, skins them and then takes their skin and sews it on his face." Shades of Leatherface!

"In order to cover the various stages of his facial decay, we had to use five appliances—a forehead, two cheeks, a chin and a nose—

made of foam latex. We glued down each piece, colored each piece, then applied the wig. But underneath the wig, the Phantom is bald. He also wears false teeth. What we managed to capture is the uniqueness of the Phantom. On the surface, he's very ugly, while at the same time, he's kind of handsome. The character could characteristically go out for a night at the opera."

Englund's interpretation of the role was derived from historical research and modern psychological theory.

Another intriguing element of the production involves the location shooting of *The Phantom* in Hungary. Oddly, this is the second *Phantom* to be filmed there, preceded by Halml Productions' 1982 TV version. "Hungary has a very large state-run motion picture film facility called Ma Filma," said director Little, "and they are the government studio in Hungary. They have a film institute there which is the equivalent of a film school, but is part of the state. They produce TV, feature films, and they have below-the-line people (the crew), studios and sound-stages, everything we needed. They didn't subsidize the picture but were paid a fee by the production company to provide services for the pictures. When you shoot there, you're purchasing their services. It's become very common in the Eastern Bloc."

Apparently, Hungary was hospitable to the actors and crew. "We shot about 60% of stuff in studios outside of Budapest and did some location work as well," continued Little. "The opera house itself was a location, in a small provincial town about 100 kilometers outside of Budapest. In fact, it was probably one of the few places in the world where Freddy Krueger could go unrecognized. The exposure to western films in Hungary just hasn't been that great, although the pace is picking up; it's especially picked up over the past year."

After hours, the cast and crew didn't rest idle, making the most out of their time in Hungary. "There was a fair amount of poking up behind the scenes," admits Little. "It's pretty much par for the course when you're on location, and in our case with Hungarians, Americans, British and Israelis, it was pretty much mix and match. Since everybody lived in the same hotel for eight weeks, things were bound to happen."

This version of *The Phantom* is going to have plenty of competition: three new films, including one based on the Andrew Lloyd Webber play, are slated for release within the next two years. But with the casting of Englund in the role, Freddy Krueger's fans should be in abundance.

Opera, anyone? □

DARK ANGEL

Continued from page 39



Aztec (Jay Bilal) won't stop until he finds Talec.

ever seen. Lots of stuntmen, lots of actors, cars exploding and flipping over, fireballs everywhere. In one scene we have Talec running over the hoods of cars while explosions go off in the cars, around the cars, parts of the cars fly off. . . it's quite something.

Craig wanted to see a wall of fire six stories high all across this six-lane boulevard.

"We did an explosion at the Franklin Bank, a historical building that's 80 years old," he relates. "Craig wanted to see a wall of fire six stories high all across this six-lane boulevard and that's what I gave him. It was awesome. We built fire hoods around the windows to hold the initial source of the explosion. We used naphthalene bombs inside the building and put gasoline barriers outside so that the fire would progress from inside to outside. We had mortars behind cars blowing gas on the fire at ground level and the whole thing climbed about ten stories high. There were 29 different explosions, 29 different wires to multiple detonators at the other end, and they had to be fired in sequence. It took eight of us about 12 hours to rig that effect. I like to see things blow up right—it's a science."

Dark Angel covers a lot of bases. It has action and humor, drama and a science fiction twist, aliens and explosions. Van Zeebroeck sums it all up: "This is going to be a hot movie." □

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HF-WINTER

COMMUNION

Continued from page 45

Mora, working closely with Australian cinematographer Irving for the third time, elected to give the film a gritty look. "After all, *Communion* is a true story. We didn't want the movie to look too glitzy or glossy. We also didn't want to make it too colorful; the colors were muted. The idea was to give the film a realistic look."

By his own account, Strieher met at least four types of aliens at different points in his abduction. The aliens in the film were designed by New York artist Ted Seth Holt from Strieher's exact descriptions in the book. "Of course, there was really no clear-cut idea of what they looked like anyway. There was the *Communion* figure that was on the cover of the book. There were two types of aliens that he saw more often than the others. They always had a surrealistic edge to them. Whitley always thought that it was their idea of what we'd like them to look like. There was a dreamlike, theatrical element to them."



In the film, Strieher (Walken) sees the aliens during his riveting hypnotic sessions. Mora revealed, "We use quite a bit of lighting effects. It's very powerful emotionally. It has sort of a visceral impact. Hopefully, the viewer will strongly identify with Whitley during these scenes."

Mora remains convinced that the real Strieher's account is quite credible. He's always believed in the possibility of human contact with intelligent aliens. "Of course, if these highly intelligent, non-humans exist, our perceptions of them would be limited by our own imaginations. There could be millions of them around and we don't even know it. Maybe we simply can't see them. I just don't know... The film hopefully explores all this stuff."

"I feel *Communion* is a very unique film," he added. "It's definitely not your typical horror film. Yet, there are bits that are deeply frightening. It's all been very positive from my point of view. In fact, I've never been associated with a film that has this much positive energy." □

ARGENTO

Continued from page 42

claims to have completed the screenplay for the last installment in the series, he hasn't yet tackled the third "Three Mothers" picture.

Following *Inferno*, he joined forces with George Romero and helped produce *Dawn of the Dead*, also having a hand in the film's eerie score. When he returned to directing, it was with *Tenebre*, inspired



by an encounter in Los Angeles with a fan who professed to have been strongly influenced by *Suspiria* and confided in Argento that he wanted to kill him. A *giallo*, *Tenebre* revolves around a writer of gory thrillers and the maniac who seems inspired by his work. The violence is the most extreme Argento has ever committed to film: when a girl's arm is chopped off with an ax, the resulting bloodbath is awesome, though the few viewers who caught *Unsane*, (as *Tenebre* was retitled in the US), did not see much of it after MPAA cuts were made. *Tenebre*'s extensive use of lyrical flashbacks featuring hermaphrodite Eva Robinne/Roberto as a seductive mystery woman in white, alternating with harshly lit scenes from the life of Peter Neal, the successful writer who isn't quite what he seems, is particularly dreamlike. *Tenebre*'s exuberance and malicious cleverness stand in stark contrast to the note of hysterical despair on which it ends, and in all, it is one of Argento's most accomplished works. Not the case with *Phenomena* (*Creepers*, in the US), a mishmash that pits a psychotic murderer loose in a private academy against a schoolgirl who can communicate telepathically with insects. Killer freaks, pools of maggots and razor-wielding chimpanzees notwithstanding, *Phenomena* doesn't amount to much.

With Gaston LeRoux's *Phantom* (eve-

ryone's minds these days, it may seem natural that Argento's latest film takes place at the opera. (He considered a version of the classic a decade ago and rejected it.) *Opera*'s roots lie in an aborted plan to direct Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Rigoletto* for the Sferisterio Theatre in Italy. Filled with divas, sumptuous set pieces and murderous ravens, *Opera* revolves around a young singer whose big chance—singing the lead in *Macbeth*—is threatened by a maniac

who delights in forcing her to watch him murder and mutilate her co-workers. Her eyes held open by a diabolical arrangement of straight pins, the singer becomes a stand-in for everyone who has ever sat transfixed as horrors unfolded on-screen, dismayed, but unable to look away. Unrehearsed in America, *Opera* is lavish and baroque, incorporating strands picked up from Argento's earlier films into a lavish tapestry of deceit, perversion and violence.

With ten films to his credit, Argento has built up a body of work many directors would envy. Seeing them isn't always easy, but many video stores stock *The Bird* with the *Crystal Plume* (United Home Video), *Deep Red/The Hatchet Murders* (Thron/EMI), *Inferno* (Key Video), the mutilated *Unsane/Tenebre* (Fox Hills) and *Creepers/Phenomena* (Media Home Entertainment). *Dario Argento's World of Horror* (Vidmark Entertainment), directed by protege Michele Soavi (whose *Bloody Bird* has that Argento look as surely as does Lamberto Bava's *Demons*—both have acted as assistant director) provides a glimpse of Argento at work, interspersed with choice cuts from his films. Many of his other films turn up on local TV stations and occasionally in movie theaters. As to the future, we can rest assured that Argento has no plans to abandon genre filmmaking—there will be more dispatches from the Argento zone, and they will be weird. □

PREVIEW

BRAIN DEAD

Actor Bill Paxton talks about Roger Corman's newest shocker

By R.J. Marx

If you ever need brain surgery, make sure you avoid the Lakeside Mental Hospital where, if the goings-on inside there are anything like the ones portrayed in Concorde Pictures' *Brain Dead*, you'd be wiser to take a pair of scissors and do it yourself.

It all begins in the ivory towers of New York's Cornell University. After years of research, a mild-mannered psychiatrist, Dr.



Dr. Halsey (Bill Pullman) goes down to the surgery to secure his perfective.



Bill Pullman, George Kennedy and Bill Paxton observe the grisly doings.



Rex Martin (Bill Pullman), is ready to field-test his discoveries on paranoids and schizophrenics. Sincere in his professional motives, the doctor is a do-gooder intent on becoming the Jonas Salk of the mentally defective.

But integrity in the medical world is a rare commodity, and a college friend, James Reston (no resemblance to the "New York Times" columnist of the same name), played by Bill Paxton, is soon trying to undermine Martin's personal goals. While Dr. Martin passionately wants to use his skills to aid mankind, Reston, representing UNIS, a huge, multi-national corporation, urges Reston to use his talents for quite different purposes. He and his corporation want Reston to perform brain surgery on a brilliant physicist, Dr. Halsey (Bud Cort). Halsey, who suffers from acute paranoia, holds scientific secrets worth millions.

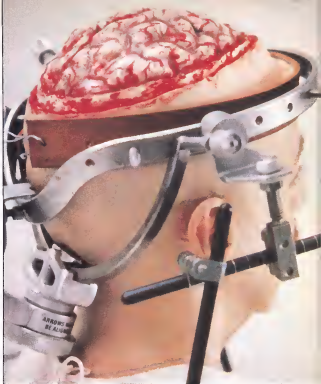
Reston presses Dr. Martin to use his magical hands to extract the vital information from the deepest recesses of Dr. Halsey's diseased mind.

Dr. Martin's efforts take place in the Lakeside Mental Hospital, where his patient is wildly delirious, convinced he's being followed by a delivery man in a blood-stained, white suit. The therapy sessions are brought to a premature conclusion when Dr. Martin is hit by a car on his way home from the hospital. The injury begins to effect not only his body, but his mind as well.

It soon seems that his was no accident, as Dr. Martin begins to turn paranoid, suffering from wild delusions. He embarks on a demented trip through the mind, wandering, as the producers have described it, "through the many halls and corridors of his psyche." Dr. Martin's turnaround is complete: he is no longer the physician, but a patient at Lakeside, a test subject himself. He ultimately discovers that he has been manipulated all along by the omniscient, all-powerful UNIS Corporation.

Bill Paxton plays the insidious Reston, the corporate honcho who sees the world as his playground; its people, his pawns. Paxton, who has had major roles in *Aliens*, *Weird Science* and *Near Dark*, views *Brain Dead* as a statement about modern business and society. Could a corporation undermine the integrity of an otherwise up-right medical professional?

Paxton cites the case of a bio-technician who was working for Livermore Laboratories in California. "Thinking he was developing medical technology," Paxton relates, "he was actually developing 'Star Wars' technology for the military. When he found



out what they were using his work for, he flipped out. Now, he's given up the corporate world and is teaching at MIT. He feels he totally got the shaft."

Paxton contemplates the possibilities. "Is the situation in *Brain Dead* real life? Yes and no. I don't think people are holding guns at people's heads, making them act against their will. But the money involved, and the research facilities involved to conduct these sophisticated experiments, are almost totally corporate-funded or supported by the Department of Defense. Private citizens don't have the means to conduct these experiments because they require so much technology and so much money. These research corporations are the modern Mephistopheles, and researchers make Faustian bargains with them, either for money, titles or promises. What often happens is they realize they've sold their souls. By the time they want to get out, they get out, but feel used. In *Brain Dead*, that's what Dr. Martin finds himself up against. . . . He becomes swallowed by the system."

The scenario of *Brain Dead* (originally titled *Phantom*) is both haunting and real; interestingly, this very contemporary concept was first developed over 20 years ago



The patients believe they are being followed by a delivery man in a blood-stained white shirt.



Dr. Martin has seen better days.

in screenplay form by the late Charles Beaumont, best known for his scripts for the original *Twilight Zone* series. Beaumont, with an uncanny eye, had boned in on what lies below the surface of our scientific/military complex.

Essentially it was the Beaumont script that aroused interest among the producers, the director/writer, and the actors. Roger Corman had long intended to make the film but it had languished until 27-year-old director Adam Simon took hold of the project, giving it an update and polish. Simon then spent several months corraling top-notch talent to join the project.

Bill Paxton explains how he got involved. "I got excited talking to Adam about it; then when I heard Bill Pullman, who had starred

in *The Serpent and the Rainbow* and co-starred in *Ruthless People* and *The Accidental Tourist*, had signed aboard, I became very interested. And Cort, who performed in one of the *Hitchhiker* episodes with me, was approached but was a little unsure about getting involved, because he had been burned on a lot of low-budget things, but he was impressed by Adam. I told him Adam's a corner and the characters are great—so he signed on and played Dr. Halsey."

The female lead is held by Patricia Charbonneau, the young star of *Desert Hearts* and *Call Me*. George Kennedy is featured as the Chairman of the Board of UNIS Corporation, while character actor Nicholas Pryor rounds out the cast.

The experience of working with Corman seems to be a rite of passage for many performers, and *Brain Dead* was no exception. Roger's wife Julie acted as line producer, organizing the shoot and bringing it in in 23 days. Paxton smiles, "That's certainly not a record for a Corman picture, but in terms of the script we attempted and the production values and the cast, it was quite a noble effort. We shot it in LA, did a week's location work, and for the next two weeks shot in the old lumber yard in Venice, California that the Corman's now use as a studio."

For Paxton, that lumber yard has fond memories. "Several years ago I met director/writer James Cameron there, on a film called *Galaxy of Terror*. At the time he was writing *The Terminator*. There is life after Corman!"

No brain-surgery film would be complete without the gruesome going-on inside the skull. Those gooey masses of human sweethearts always make for luscious film viewing, and *Brain Dead* will not disappoint neural voyeurs.

Beaumont, with an uncanny eye, had honed in on what lies below the surface of our scientific/military complex.

"The brain surgery is staged really beautifully," Paxton enthuses. "It takes place in the UNIS board room. We see a white room through a glass partition, with an operating table, scalpels, surgical gear, and a dental chair in the middle of the room. Bud Cort is clamped into the chair and the whole top half of his head has been removed, exposing his brain. The board members sit there as if they're watching a movie during the whole operation. The make-up on Bud was amazing. At first it was kind of unnerving to look at... then it became hypnotizing."

Though Paxton is the corrupting influence on the earnest Dr. Martin, he does receive revenge of a sort. Paxton explains, "I get mutilated in a fantasy sequence in Dr. Martin's head. He comes home, sees me making love to his wife and goes crazy. I look up and see a guy in a white coat standing over me holding an ice-pick-type device used during the 50s to perform lobotomies. He takes the instrument and slams it into my upper eye."

Despite his gruesome film fate, Paxton views *Brain Dead* as a notable work of horror. "I think the picture was a great effort to do something a little different and a little more classical. The film does have a classic *Twilight Zone* plot to it, reworking classic material in a new way. It's got a lot of black humor. My fans will dig it."

The acclaimed
novelist reveals
some of his inner
workings



By Georgia La Fontaine

"If the idea is good, it takes about a week to do the outline... (and) a month to write the book."

CREATURE



A NOVEL BY THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *SUFFER THE CHILDREN* AND *THE UNWANTED*

JOHN SAUL

John Saul's first novel, *Suffer the Children*, hit the bestseller list in 1977, establishing him as a leading author of horror and psychological/supernatural suspense. And every year since then he has satisfied over a million genre readers, topping the charts with such titles as *The God Project*, *Brainchild*, *The Unwanted* and *The Unloved*. Born in California and residing in Seattle, Saul has had his books published in 13 countries besides the US. He is currently at work on a new novel, and his latest, *Creature*, is available now from Bantam Books.

HF: Do you consider yourself a horror novelist?

JS: I don't. It's hard to convince readers that I don't actually write horror. I write more "psychological thrillers."

HF: How long does it take you to write a novel?

JS: When I'm involved in writing a book, I'm thinking about it all the time. I am investigating the characters, analyzing and talking to them, and listening to them talking together. It's impossible to stop the writing process in my head. (However,) I have come over the years to discover that if an idea does not develop rapidly, it probably will not develop at all. And, generally speaking, if the idea is good, it takes about a week to do the outline. Then generally it takes about a month to write the book.

HF: Who is your audience?

JS: I have a very wide high-school audience. I did not set out to write for a high-school audience, but those kids really enjoy the stuff I write. And as I have become more and more conscience of (the members of) that audience, I tend to gear things towards them. I try to alert them to

possible problems. I received a letter after *Brainchild* from a kid who said that he sat through lecture after lecture about the dangers of drinking and driving. After reading *Brainchild* he stopped drinking. That was it. The description of that accident after those kids went up to that mansion and got drunk stopped him dead.

HF: Most of your novels take place predominantly in the present. Do you have any plans to write novels that take place either in the past or in the future?

JS: Not really. Often in a psychological thriller there's something, some major trauma lurking in the past that has to be dealt with because (it is) now bubbling to the surface and creating havoc. I don't like trying to second-guess the future. I don't have a good handle on that sort of thing.

HF: Isn't the present more difficult to write about?

JS: It doesn't seem to be. I don't know. I ran into one problem when I was writing *Nathaniel*, which involved some cannibalism, tastefully handled. The cannibalism was in the section of the book that was cast 100 years earlier. There was this terrible winter in Nebraska when finally some woman was reduced to eating her own children. It was all quite believable. And I wanted to repeat it in the present. I wrote it four times, but I could not make it the least bit believable. It was just absolutely silly and no one was going to believe it. So that ended that.

"I always wind up setting these stories in some small town in the middle of nowhere."

HF: Let's talk about the *Creature*.

JS: I actually got the idea for *Creature* from watching the news one night about a year-and-a-half ago. They were doing a report about "designer human bodies" which involved using human growth hormones and steroids plus some generic manipulation with recombinant DNA. (The report proposed that) in the future it will be possible to pick a body type that you would like to have. I suddenly thought, there's my next book. Okay, now that I've got the main theme of designer bodies, so what? What am I going to do with it? Then I suddenly thought, God, all over the country there are these high school football teams; what if one of these little towns figured out a way to make its team absolutely unbeatable? And it all pretty much came together from those two ideas. Once the "what if" is situated, then it gets really interesting. I have to come up with the locale. I always wind up setting these stories in some small town out in the middle of nowhere. (And then the characters.) In

Creature, Mark has to be somewhat unhappy with himself to be so willing to get involved, which makes him an interesting character right off the bat. Something of a misfit, nursing a few problems...

HF: And of course, there is the competitive father.

JS: And the thinking starts as those two characters appear to fit themselves into the story and obviously you need the doctor. Got to have the doctor.

HF: Does the society in the book emphasize that to excel in sports is to excel in life?

JS: It seems to. I know when I was in high school, the football players were "it." The jocks were the big men on campus. Of course, a lot of them ended up in later years learning they had peaked in high school. I think that if Americans were half as concerned about the conditions of their minds as they are about the conditions of their bodies, we would have fewer problems in this country. We are absolutely obsessed with the conditions of our bodies. Now, I don't understand what people think we are going to achieve. We are going to die anyway. We are not going to achieve immortality through physical fitness.

HF: When the experiment (in the book) goes awry, the *Creature* does emerge. Do you feel that the attempt to achieve perfection carries with it its own inherent risks?

JS: Oh, of course, I think *Creature* is a cautionary tale. It was intended to be. I'm a great believer that, for the kind of writer I am, my primary job is to entertain. But I always feel that there should be some kind of message in my books. The reader shouldn't realize he's getting a message, though, until it's all over with, because I don't think the message should interfere with the entertainment. I think it was Samuel Goldwyn who said (to paraphrase), "If you want to send a message, call Western Union." But I'm a great fan of Noel Coward and I've read all of his plays over and over. They're wonderfully funny and light and frothy and then a couple of hours later you begin realizing, hey, he really was saying something here. But you never get the feeling of being lectured. I try to achieve that. I try not to preach.

HF: And *Creature's* message?

JS: It's (about the), "I want my children to be better than I was" thing, where the whole emphasis is on inflicting flashcards on babies in cribs, enrolling them in the right pre-school and teaching them to multiply by kindergarten. Let a kid be a kid. Let him play. Whatever happened to going out on the street with the rest of the kids and pulling together a game of stickball? Why does everything have to have uniforms and be organized, the whole emphasis on winning instead of on having a good time? When I was a kid, we

had a good time.

HF: Tarentech is a large computer industry. Is it the real monster of this novel?

JS: Oh, I think undoubtedly Tarentech is HF: Do you think computer/technological/pharmaceutical companies have the power or knowledge to unleash a monster in our time?

JS: I don't think there's any question. The interesting thing about computers is that they can do practically anything. They are the tool to get any needed information. I used this in *The God Project* years ago, when the company (can't remember the name) was using computers to track its subjects all over the country. If you know what you're doing, you can hack into any other computer, open up the data banks and find out what you want about anybody. The scary part about computers is that they provide the ability to gather information so rapidly over such a wide area. Nobody can hide from computers.

HF: Have you been approached by a major motion picture company yet?

JS: Actually, there is an option on *Creature*.

HF: Do you like the idea of putting one of your novels on the screen?

JS: I have no objection to it if they don't butcher it.

HF: But you're not excited about this?

JS: I don't ever get excited about movie deals because there are so many options

"I feel that there should be some kind of message in my books."

that never amount to anything. With film, you don't get excited until it opens in the theaters.

HF: Of all your novels to date, which one is your personal favorite?

JS: *The God Project*. I really liked the whole idea of that. But I think the most fun to write was *The Unloved*. I just had a ball writing that book. I just think that Marguerite was a fabulous lady.

HF: Do you read other authors, any personal favorites?

JS: My favorites are (people who write) international spy thrillers. I love Frederick Forsythe and Robert Ludlum. If there is a Swastika on the cover, I will buy it. I love Helen McGinnis. I would really love to be able to pull off one of those some day, but I doubt that it's a genre I could handle too well.

HF: Have you read Clive Barker, Stephen King?

JS: I tried to read Clive Barker and, I'm sorry, but swamp monster books don't do it for me. □

BUGS

Continued from page 57

The two sequels of the original, *Return of the Fly* (58) and *Curse of the Fly* (65), give little return on the more outlandish potential of man-bug transformations. The first, setting out to be a thriller—rather than a sci-fi vehicle—sadly fails to arouse much suspense, making Philippe Delambre (Beet Halsey as André's son) a thing that goes bump in the night.

The *Curse* lowered the concept of partial metamorphosis even further. Two more brave Delambres (Brian Donlevy and George Baker) set up teleportation booths in London and Montreal, and end up with incredibly unrealistic-looking monsters. The transformation of men into bugs had become a bland and predictable affair.

Roger Corman tried his hand at the transformation game with *The Wasp Woman* (63), which he produced and directed. The B-grade story revolves around a cosmetics millionairess (Susan Cabot) who's trying to counter her aging with an experimental treatment of wasp enzymes. She gets an overdose of her own medicine, however, and changes into a blood-sucking, bug-headed creature.

The British contribution is another low-budgeter, *The Blood Beast Terror* (67, aka *The Vampire Beast Craves Blood*). This time Peter Cushing injects moth serum into a young lady (Wanda Ventham), causing her to turn into a giant, blood-lusting moth.

Transformation flicks incorporate the detestable bug and all its awful attributes in its victim.

Cushing is said to feel this film is the worst he's ever made, which must be an honor of sorts. In these cases, the bug motif is employed as a cheap synonym for savagery, and interesting concepts are barely filled out.

To be fair, these films give low-budget bug vehicles a black eye: an inexpensive bottom line does not necessarily make a film unwatchable, and camp can be one escape from mediocrity. *Invasion of the Bee Girls* (73) never takes itself too seriously, and thus doesn't have any pretenses to look ridiculous. The plot involves a mad entomologist (Susan Cabot) who has made herself into a new bee-ving by a process that involves bees and lots of wax. She creates several converts from among the local lovelies, turning them into dangerously insatiable creatures who go around killing men by having incredibly strenuous sexual intercourse with them. To do credit to the story, scriptwriter Nicholas Meyer (*Time After Time*) manages to hold this far-fetched idea to the ground while infusing it with above-par bounce and vitality.

Although the movie contains overly gratuitous scenes of sex and violence, it also has its share of odd twists and entertaining segments. *Bee Girls* has many amusing moments, including a parody of the classic bug's-eye-view camera shot.

Bugs have come from outer space in a multitude of forms, most often as bodily components of alien creatures. Bug-eyed monsters were a standard of 50s flicks, while the beasts in the more recent *Alien* are equipped with fast-moving, insect-like arms. In *The Mysterians* (59), the visitors who have come from another world to steal Earth women have tiny, unbecoming cockroach heads.

Insects lose much of their fright potential as space beings, perhaps because their forms are relatively familiar to us, in comparison to the bizarre types of life space could harbor. Appropriately, they pop up only rarely in the second Quatermass film, *Five Million Years to Earth* (68), the screen adaptation of H.G. Wells' Victorian fantasy *First Men on the Moon* (64) as well as the *Outer Limits* TV series episode "The Zanti Mistifs" (63).

Whether as giants or midgits, part-humans or beings from outer space, filmmakers have used the audience's revulsion to bugs as a tool to create fright. Sometimes the theme takes on even stranger directions. In the grotesque classic *Spider Baby* (70), a weirdly afflicted teenage girl believes she is a spider, trapping human "bugs." Often the bug in the title is merely connotative of the vicious and the bizarre, and bears little relation to the film.

Regardless of the story, bugs carry their own by provoking basic human fears. Their on-screen appearance, when credibly portrayed, can evoke a deep-seated horror in an audience. □

DARKMAN

Continued from page 58

we've put him through, he's been incredibly patient."

Because it is not unlikely that the *Darkman* will become a continuing character, Hamlin declined to reveal many of the make-up's particulars so far in advance of the film's spring release. "Liam is in bandages for most of the movie. It takes three-and-a-half hours to get him into the full *Darkman* makeup, which we call 'stage six.' Stages one through four are the 'racoon mask,' which entails the least amount of bandages. Stages five and six are when you see him full-on without bandages. It's a ten-piece appliance make-up. The appliances, which are glued onto Liam's face, are used once and then tossed—foam rubber goes bad very quickly."

Chet Zar and Tony Gardner are credited with sculpting the design by Gardner and Hamlin (who most recently worked on

Dolph Lundgren's *Dark Angel*). Gardner and Hamlin will also be responsible for creating the decaying process which involves the liquid skin (the skin bubbles, pops and melts), as well as several related effects, some 50 in all: dummy bodies, mechanical puppet hands for actor Nicolas Wirth, a dummy hand for McDermott (for a scene wherein she picks up a mask that starts to melt) and the Face Room—life casts of several characters that Peyton uses to disguise himself at various points in the film.

Next up for Raimi is *Evil Dead III* for Renaissance Pictures, an entity he formed in 1979 with Robert Tapert and Bruce Campbell, who played Ash in *Evil Dead*. The script has already been written, and Raimi expects to go into production for Dino DeLaurentis (who bankrolled *Evil Dead II*) shortly after *Darkman* wraps.

With *Batmania* currently sweeping the country, it's easy to draw a comparison between the Caped Crusader and *Darkman*—both of whom wage an intensely personal war against crime in the form of a personal vendetta, and both of whom are psychologically complex characters who dwell in a dark underworld. "I love comic books, so I wouldn't say the comparison is unwarranted," Raimi related, "but I would say that *Darkman* is probably more like Spiderman than Batman. Like Peter Parker, Peyton is a very troubled soul—not to mention the fact that he has serious girl problems." □

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